DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 220 383 SO 014 237

AUTHOR Rush, Jean C.; Shumaker, Mary Susan
TITLE Characteristics of Adults' Figure Drawings: Observations of the Post-Adolescent Stasis in Graphic Development.
PUB DATE 21 Mar 82
NOTE 89p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 21, 1982). Some drawings are marginally legible.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Adults; *Art Education; *Developmental Stages; Educational Research; *Freehand Drawing; Majors (Students); Nonmajors; *Visual Arts

ABSTRACT

It is hypothesized that graphic skills among the general U.S. population level off at puberty. Examined were the characteristics of 357 pairs of pencil drawings of human figures (one man and one woman) made by male and female adolescents (eighth graders), nonartistic adults (university elementary education majors), and artistic adults (beginning university art majors). The results, which support the hypothesis, showed a number of similarities in graphic images from the three groups, each of which produced drawings that ranged from rudimentary to artistic. Most figure drawings at all levels exhibited an artistic naivete characterized by a stiff frontal position, oversize head, hands behind the back, stereotyped facial features, little articulation of contour, and bodies assembled by parts. These naive images had little aesthetic quality from an adult point of view. Some students at all levels produced more sophisticated or artistic images. This latter group followed art rules, used sketchy lines, and drew nudes. A few students drew profiles, fashion figures, or cartoon figures. The bulk of the document contains reproductions of the pencil drawings. (Author/RM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED220383

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Characteristics of Adults' Figure Drawings: Observations of the Post-Adolescent Stasis in Graphic Development

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jean C. Rush

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Jean C. Rush and Mary Susan Shumaker

The University of Arizona

Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York, March 21, 1982

SP 014 237

My presentation today concerns the similarities (more than the differences) among graphic images, specifically pencil drawings of human figures made from memory, that were drawn by three goups of people: adolescents (eighth graders), nonartistic adults, and artistic adults. All of the adolescents had taken or were currently taking an art class. The nonartistic adults were university elementary education students essentially without experiences in formal art education since junior high school, who considered themselves nonartistic. The artistic adults, whether or not they had any art education since adolescence, considered themselves artistic to some degree, as evidenced by their enrolling in a beginning drawing course designated for university art majors. We obtained drawings from this last group during the first week of class, before instruction had begun.

We have collected 357 pairs of pencil drawings. Each pair contains one drawing of a man and one drawing of a woman, making 714 separate drawings. Each of the drawings was made in a classroom setting according to the Goodenough-Harris format, on a piece of 8 1/2 x 11 inch white paper on which was printed a 6 x 9 inch line rectangle. We asked each student to draw full length pictures of a man and a woman as carefully as they could, placing each in the rectangle on a separate page. We allowed students

20 minutes to complete both drawings.

Our study grew from my continuing fascination with the adolescent character of images produced year after year by my nonart-major junior and senior elementary education students during a one-semester required precertification class. I determined by inquiring over the years that most of my students last participated in formal art lessons during sixth to eighth grades. I judged, in other words, that my elementary education students were typical of the adult public at large--the people we arts professionals often berate for being untalented, visually illiterate, unimaginative as art students, and insensitive as teachers to the need for art in the elementary and secondary schools.

You can observe certain graphic patterns or norms of expression in the drawings we collected.[1] Here are some typical drawings by nonartistic adults. They support our expectation that graphic development levels off at puberty among the general U.S. population.[2] Although we all know that many adults pursue a visual arts education through high school and college[3] and, while doing so, continue to increase in artistic competency, we nevertheless tend to consider many adults like these as nonartistic[4] or less inclined toward continued growth in their forms of graphic expression.

I have observed in my classes of so-called nonartistic adults, however, that after directed work in some artistic concept (positive and negative space, for example) many of my nonart-major students have produced figurative artwork comparable

to that of beginning art students; work that could in all fairness be labeled artistic, such as these linoleum relief prints. As a result I have come to wonder about the factors that operate regarding the stasis or lack of growth seen so frequently after adolescence. I wonder whether it denotes lack of educational opportunity for skill development, lack of capacity for artistic expression, or both; and even whether it might or might not be an advantage to draw artistically. Many people, after all, live quite full and satisfying lives without this particular ability.

Our study is in progress, which means that the information of most interest I have to share with you comes directly from the drawings themselves rather than from any quantification of data derived from our previous scrutiny of the images, although we have done some of that and plan to do more.[10]

I can show you, as we look at these slides, certain patterns or features we have observed that appear over and over in our collected images. We found a considerable range of skill in the drawings, from those that appear rudimentary at each educational level (adolescent,[11] nonartistic adult,[12] and artistic adult;[13] all of my slides follow this same order, to help you orient yourselves to the material) to those that show considerable artistic expertise,[14] found primarily among those done by the so-called artistic group.[15]

Most figures, however, even in that group, exhibit a certain artistic naivete characterized by a stiff frontal position, an

oversize head, no fingers or hands ingeniously hidden behind the back or in the pockets, stereotyped facial features, little articulation of the contour, and bodies assembled more by parts than with any sense of the entire figure, or gestalt.[16] Most students in each category drew clothed figures and indicated sex differences primarily by facial hair and square shoulders for men, hips and breasts for women. They generally drew men with shorter hair than women. The drawing at which you are looking was made by an adult enrolled in one of the beginning art classes.

The drawings fell into three groups that we labeled according to the degree of their artistic naivete or, conversely, their artistic sophistication.[17] We judged artistic sophistication by looking for the presence or absence of such observable characteristics as line quality, proportion, spontaneity, and compositional devices; the kinds of characteristics that Mary Rouse and later Hilda Lewis identified as criteria of artistic merit. Drawings assigned to the first group are distinguished by their naive images. Drawings in the second group display more adept or sophisiticated images. The third group contains drawings that require a good deal of skill in specific modes of representation, which employ conceptualization that is distinct from artistic merit per se: profile figures, fashion figures (both woman and man), and cartoon figures.

Naive Images

We defined naive images as those having little aesthetic quality or artistic merit from an adult point of view.[18] Students at all educational levels drew them.

These images look more like children's than like adults' drawings, although adults' naive drawings exhibit certain features not found in naive images of adolescents that seem due to increased maturity.

Man Figures. A Typical Man figure emerged in many drawings[17,18,19] at all levels. These images, when combined with the Square-Shouldered Man,[20,21,22] were the most frequent kinds of man figures that we collected. Typical Man and Square-Shouldered Man appear to be drawn by adolescents and adults, males and females alike, although, since our elementary education subjects were mainly women, this assumption has yet to be adequately tested.

A male alternative to these first two images of men appeared frequently among man figures drawn by adolescent boys, and by some adolescent girls as well. Macho Man[23,24,25,26] presented either a muscular physique or a sophisticated but often degenerate lifestyle, usually including a cigarette.

Woman Figures. The Typical Woman[27,28,29] was as common as the Typical Man, and had as its companion the Unsophisticated Woman.[30,31,32] Whether men draw women this way is till unclear, but this certainly is how most nonartistic women draw women.

Nude Figures. The nude figure, both man and woman, was attempted by relatively unsophisticated picture-makers at all levels. The nude figure seldom appeared as a serious option in adolescent drawings.[33,34]

Nonartistic adults attempted the nude figure, but still infrequently.[35,36] Artistic

adults drew nudes about one third of the time,[37,38] much more than students in the other two groups,// and many of them fell into the unsophisticated category. Nonartistic men seemed to draw the figure nude more often in both man and woman drawings than did nonartistic women. Artistic women drew nudes as frequently as artistic men, however.

Sophisticated Images

We defined sophisticated images as those containing characteristics that we associate with artistic graphic depiction. Sophisticated images appeared at all levels. We observed least of these among adolescents, more (but not a lot more) among the nonartistic adults, and most among the beginning art students, although not as many as we had expected to find. Because these artistic devices are taught so frequently in formal art education, we tended to credit their appearance to learning, either formal or informal, rather than to development. Artistic expertise took the following forms: art rules, sketchy lines, contour nudes, and artistic nudes.

Art Rules. Apparently many students had learned certain rules of drawing and attempted to apply them: depicting body parts in correct proportion, defining shapes with differential contours, and shading to produce volume were three that appeared often. Students at all educational levels tended to use these techniques, if not with the same degree of skill.[39,40,41,42,43,44]

Sketchy Lines. In popular terminology sketch denotes a drawing with artistic merit. Using sketchy lines was identified in the Goodenough-Harris criteria as indicative of maturity, so

perhaps this drawing technique is discovered independent of education by some young artists. Many art instructors also encourage students to use sketchy lines as a method for loosening up restrictive contour line in beginning students. At any rate, sketchy lines appeared in drawings at all levels, occasionally among adolescents and nonartistic adults and frequently among artistic adults.[45,46,47,48,49,50]

Contour Nudes. Careful, linear contour drawings of the nude figure can be found at all educational levels. Students generally made little attempt to describe features inside of the contour, either with line or volume. More women than men seemed to draw this kind of image that we called Contour Nude.[51,52,53,54,55,56]

Artistic Nudes. The so-called artistic drawings of the nude figure appeared to conatin all of the techniques just mentioned: rules, sketchy lines, and descriptive contours. Sometimes the figure was active, sometimes oriented horizontally on the page, and sometimes completed with background objects. We found the Artistic Nude only among drawings from the group of artistic adults, and most of them were done by women.[57,58,59,60]

Specific Concepts

We grouped into a separate category images that represented several orientations to the assigned drawing task that were distinctly different from most other responses. They appeared at all skill levels, and while they often displayed a good deal of artistic merit they appeared to be distinguishable from that dimension. These other images included profile figures, fashion figures, and cartoon figures.

Profile Figures. We found a number of profile drawings, even though this was a relatively rare approach. Students seemed to draw their woman in profile more often than their man; we speculated that perhaps it seemed easier to represent the more obvious female sexual characteristics in profile. Students who drew their woman figure in profile did not always draw their man in corresponding fashion. Most of the profile makers in our study, and all those represented here, were male.[61,62,63,64,65,66]

Fashion Figures. Fashion Woman was drawn by female students at all age levels.[67,68,69] Creators of Fashion Woman paid attention to such things as hair, shoes, and accessories as well as to clothing and a fashionably slender figure. All women who drew Fashion Woman also represented their man in a fashionable manner.[70] Fashion Man, on the other hand, was drawn by men, apparently with the same enthusiasm.[71,72,73] Men, too, drew their woman fashionably.[74] Fashion drawings by both men and women showed great similarity.

Cartoon Figures. Cartooning appeared to be a predominantly male approach to the assigned drawing task, although one of these artists is female--can you guess which one? Cartooning was an infrequent response, and generally produced an image that revealed an observant eye. The connection with artistic skill is apparent, because the cartoon figures are adeptly drawn, but for a purpose other than aesthetic.[75,76,77,78,79,80]

Discussion

Adolescent Drawings

Our adolescent drawings looked typical of the junior high

school age population.[30] More adolescent figures were small in relation to the rectangle in which they were drawn, and many displayed short arms reaching only to the waist, a phemonemon not found in drawings by adults. Adolescents were more willing than adults to draw hands and feet. Many included background objects and written words. Adolescents' cartooning was more frequent than adults', but often displayed a graffiti-like character, perhaps from an interest in sexually descriptive images. The adolescents' man and woman often looked either like children or like Macho Man, showing little understanding of adulthood. In general, adolescents displayed little artistic expertise.

Nonartistic Adult Drawings

The graphic efforts of nonartistic adults were more comparable to adolescent art than to the graphic images of artistic adults who displayed some artistic skills.[18] Despite a rudimentary artistic level, the figures in the drawings of all adults looked older than the figures made by adolescents, reflecting the adult conceptual level of their creators. Figures drawn by nonartistic adults often looked more stilted, however, than those drawn by adolescents: stiff, frontal posture, top-heavy from the large head, and with the most stereotyped facial features and body parts of any of the three subject groups. Most nonartistic adults were timid about their ability to render hands and feet and became inventive in figuring postural devices to avoid having to deal with them. The general stiffness of the naive drawings of nonartistic adults

suggested a self-consciousness about the activity, with a corresponding reluctance to take aesthetic risks. They seemed to believe there was a right or wrong way to draw and that, without knowing the rules, proceeding with caution was their best option.

Artistic Adult Drawings

Artistic adults made their figures larger in relation to the rectangle, with heads generally in correct proportion to the figure.[15] Artistic adults produced more sketchy lines, nudes, action, and realistic facial features than any other group. Background objects, as in other groups, were rare. We found a greater range of ability, from rudimentary to expert, in drawings by nonartistic adults than in drawings from other kinds of students.

Evaluation

At present we are in the process of evaluating each of the 714 drawings according to two different measures, a Detail Test and an Artistic Merit Test. The Detail Test is a shortened version of the Goodenough-Harris 1963 Draw-A-Man and Draw-A-Woman point Scales. Because we are studying only older children and adults, we have reduced the seventy-odd items on the original scales to 48 by restricting the list to those that identify the most detail.

The Artistic Merit Test is a modified version of Lewis and Mussen's 1968 revision of the Rouse Scale, designed to identify artistic creativity in preadolescents by judging their artworks for aesthetic merit and originality. Scores from both tests will be used to compare performances between groups (adolescents,

nonartistic adults, and artistic adults) and between sexes. We shall also look to see whether or not there is any correlation between performances on the two rating scales and, if so, may examine it in more detail.

References

Brown, E. V. Developmental characteristics of clay figures made by children from age three through age eleven. Studies in Art Education, 1975, 16 (3), 45-53.

Butterworth, G. (Ed.). The child's representation of the world. New York: Plenum Press, 1977.

Eisner, E. Creative and psychological health during adolescence. High School Journal, 1965, 48 (8), 465-473.

Gibson, J. J. The information available in pictures. Leonardo, 1971, 4, 27-35.

Golomb, C. Young children's sculpture and drawing: A study in representational development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Goodenough, F. L. Measurement of intelligence by drawings. New York: World Book, 1926.

Harris, D. B. Children's drawings as measures of intellectual maturity. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1963.

Kennedy, J. M. A psychology of picture perception. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974.

Lewis, H. P., & Mussen, P. H. Evaluating children's artistic creativity. Studies in Art Education, 1968, 10 (3), 25.

Lorge, I., Tuckman, J., & Dunn, M. B. Human figure drawings of younger and older adults. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1958, 14, 54-56.

Rosenstiel, A. K., & Gardner, H. The effect of critical comparisons upon children's drawings. Studies in Art Education, 1977, 19, 36-43.

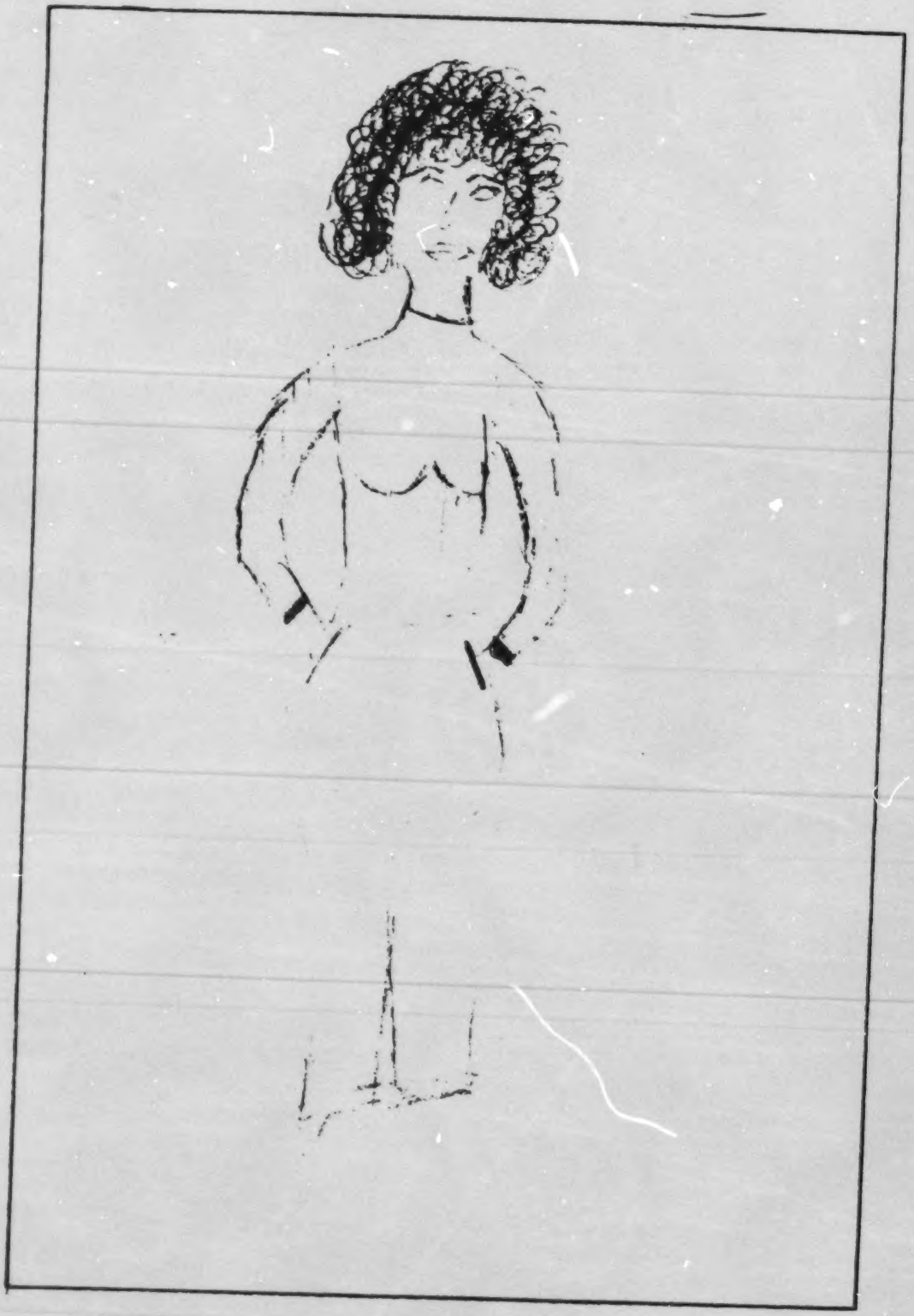
Smith, N. Developmental origins of graphic symbolization in the paintings of children three to five. Review of Research in Visual Arts Education, 1981, 13, 9-17.

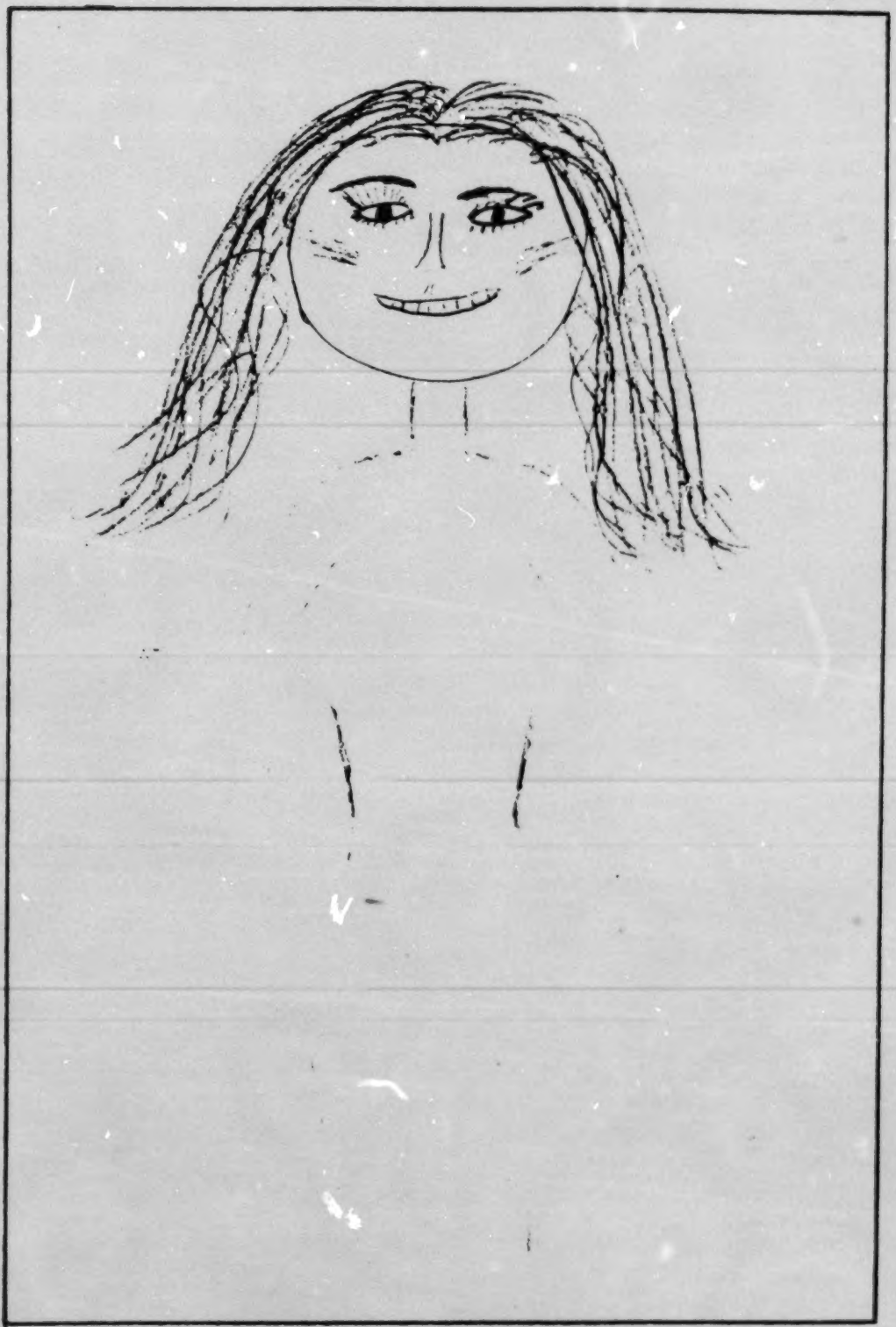
Willats, J. How children learn to draw realistic pictures. Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 1977, 29, 367-382.

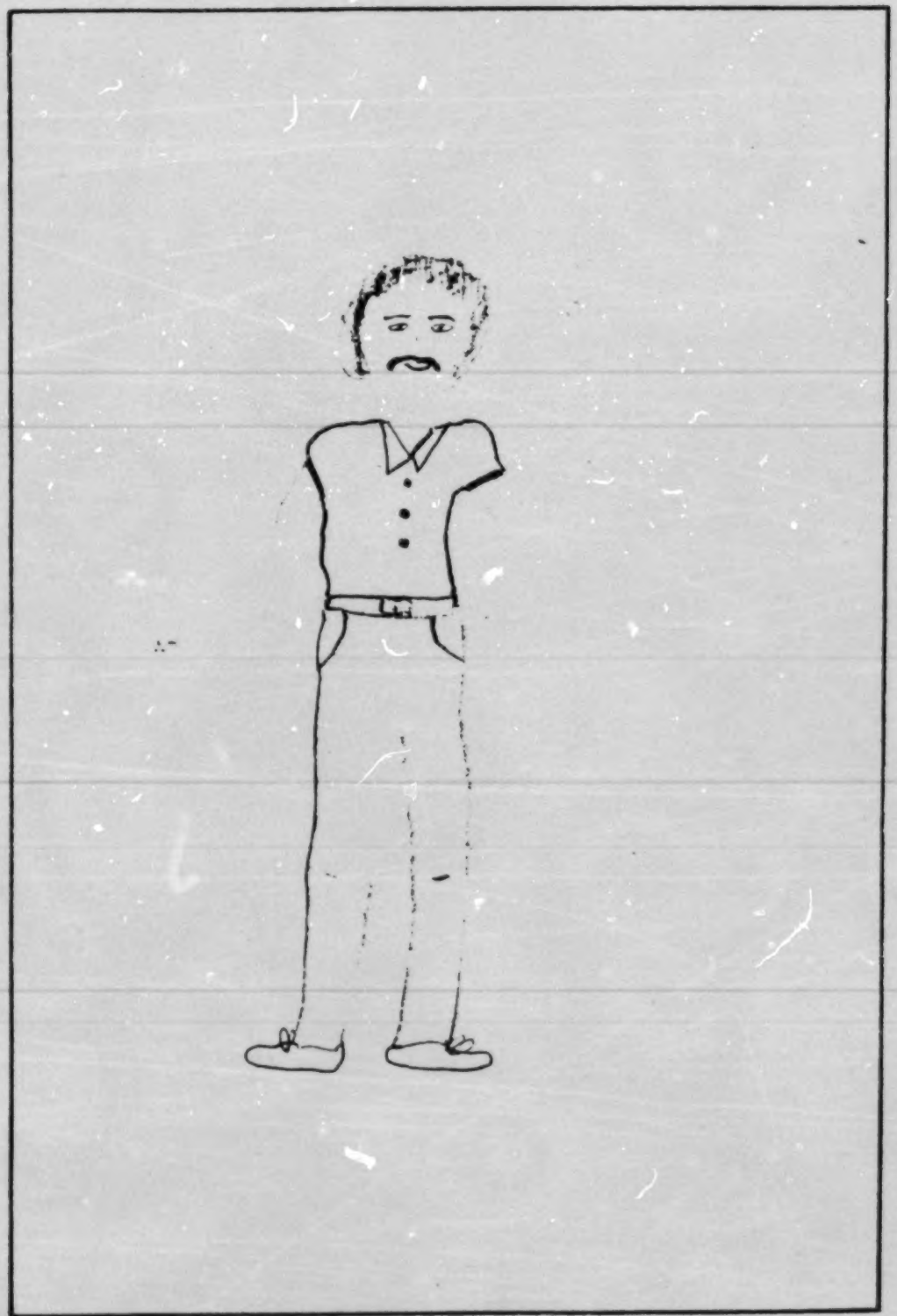
Willats, J. What do the marks in the picture stand for? The child's acquisition of systems of transformation and denotation. Review of Research in Visual Arts Education, 1981, 13, 18-33.

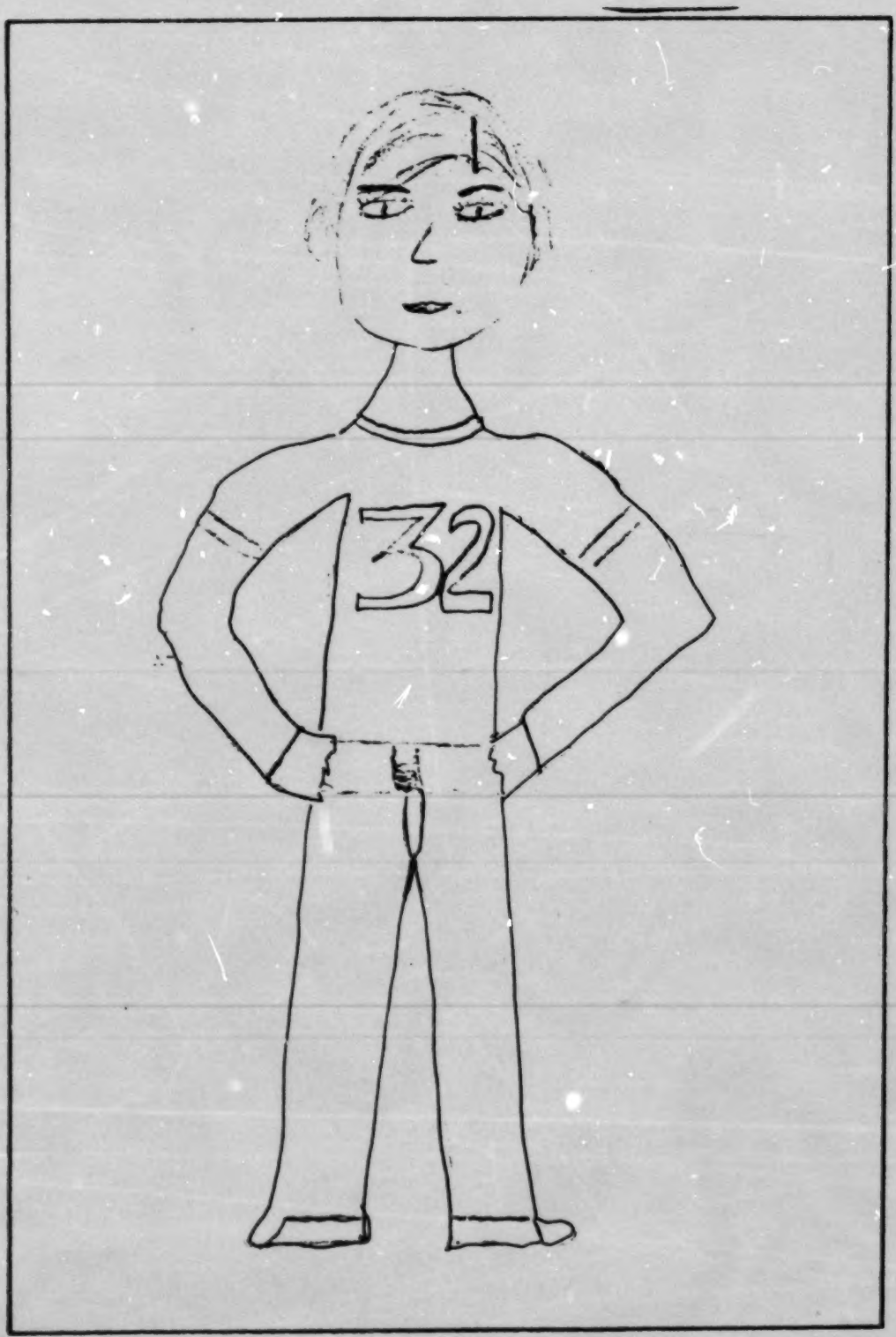
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

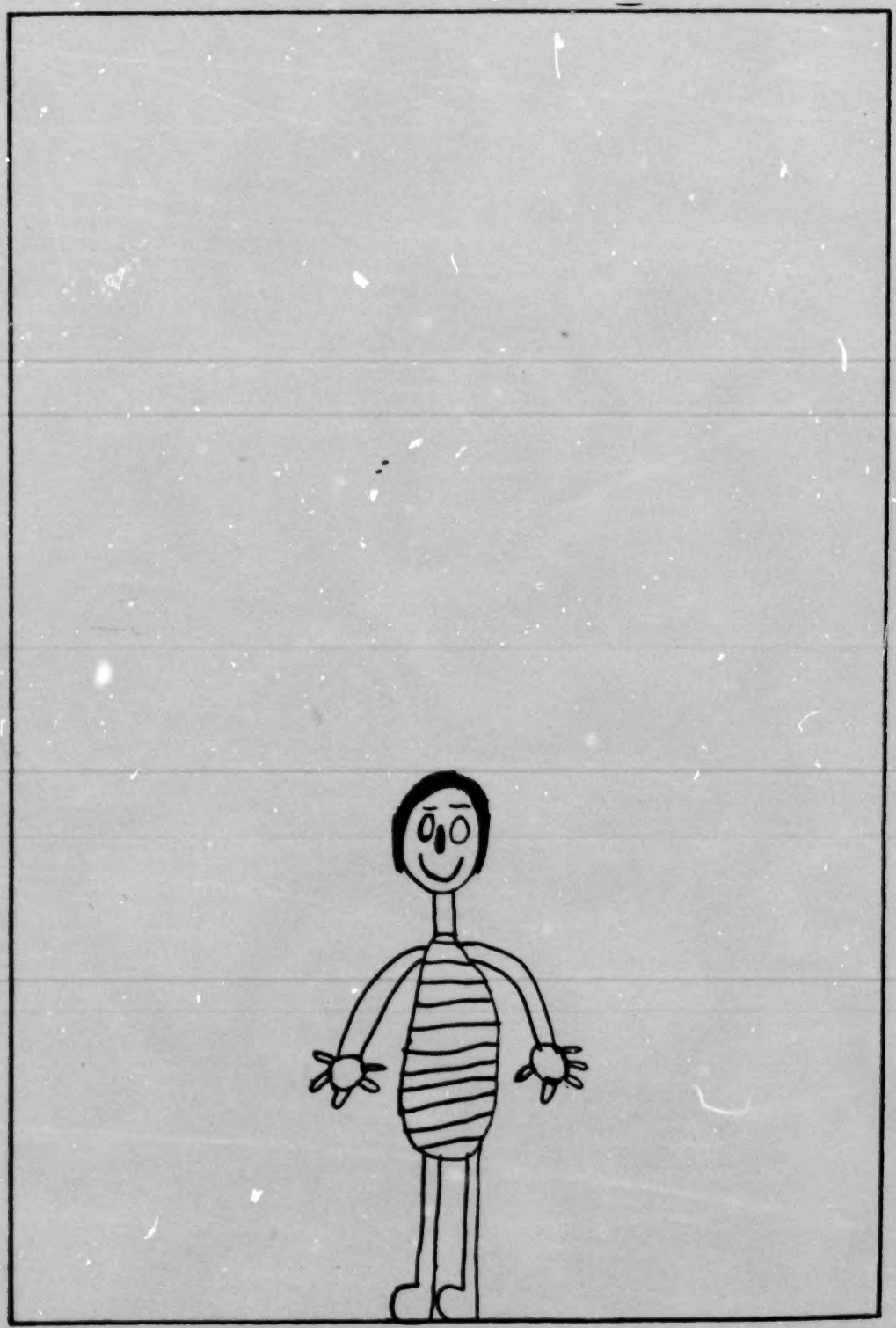
1



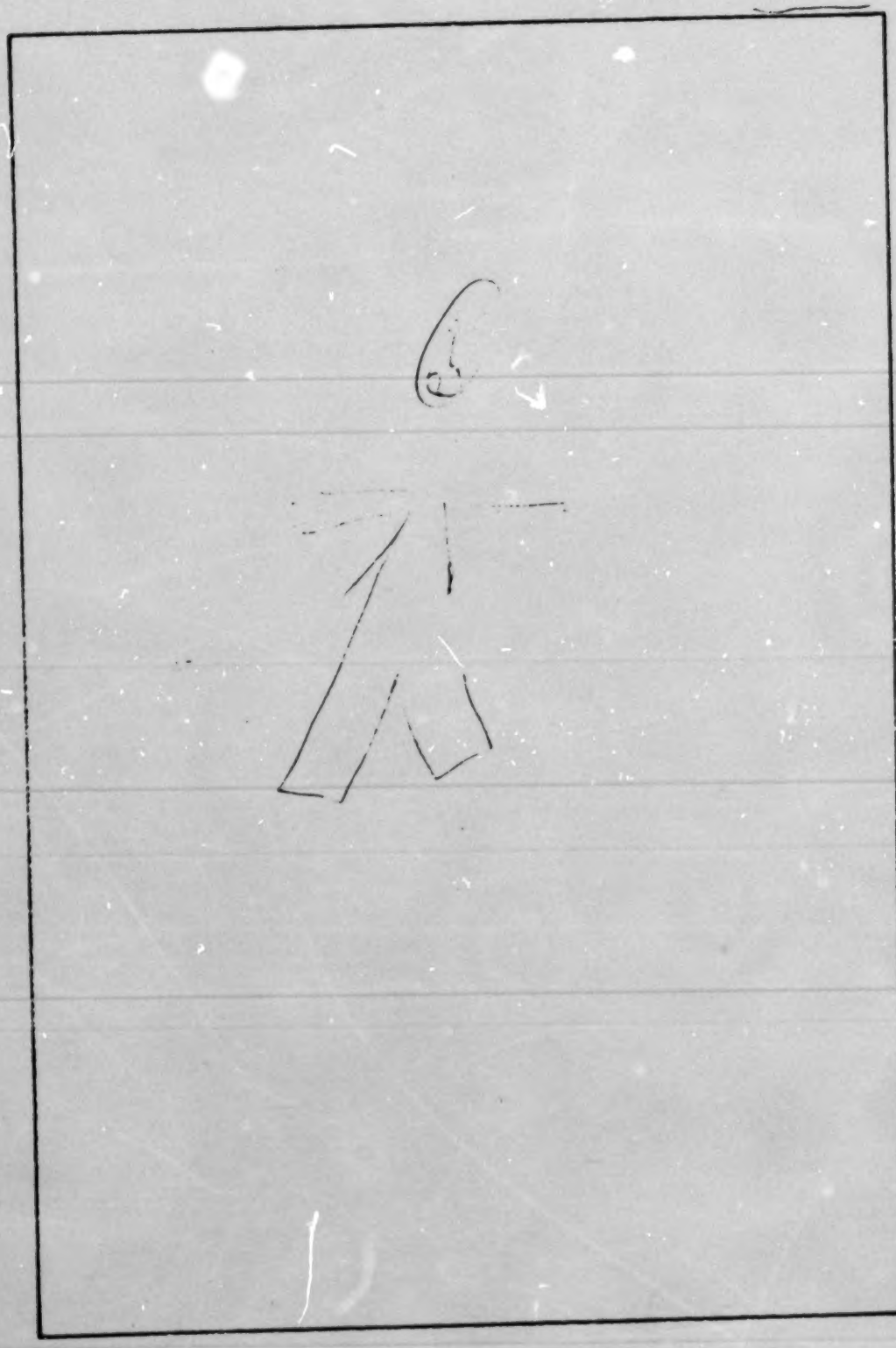


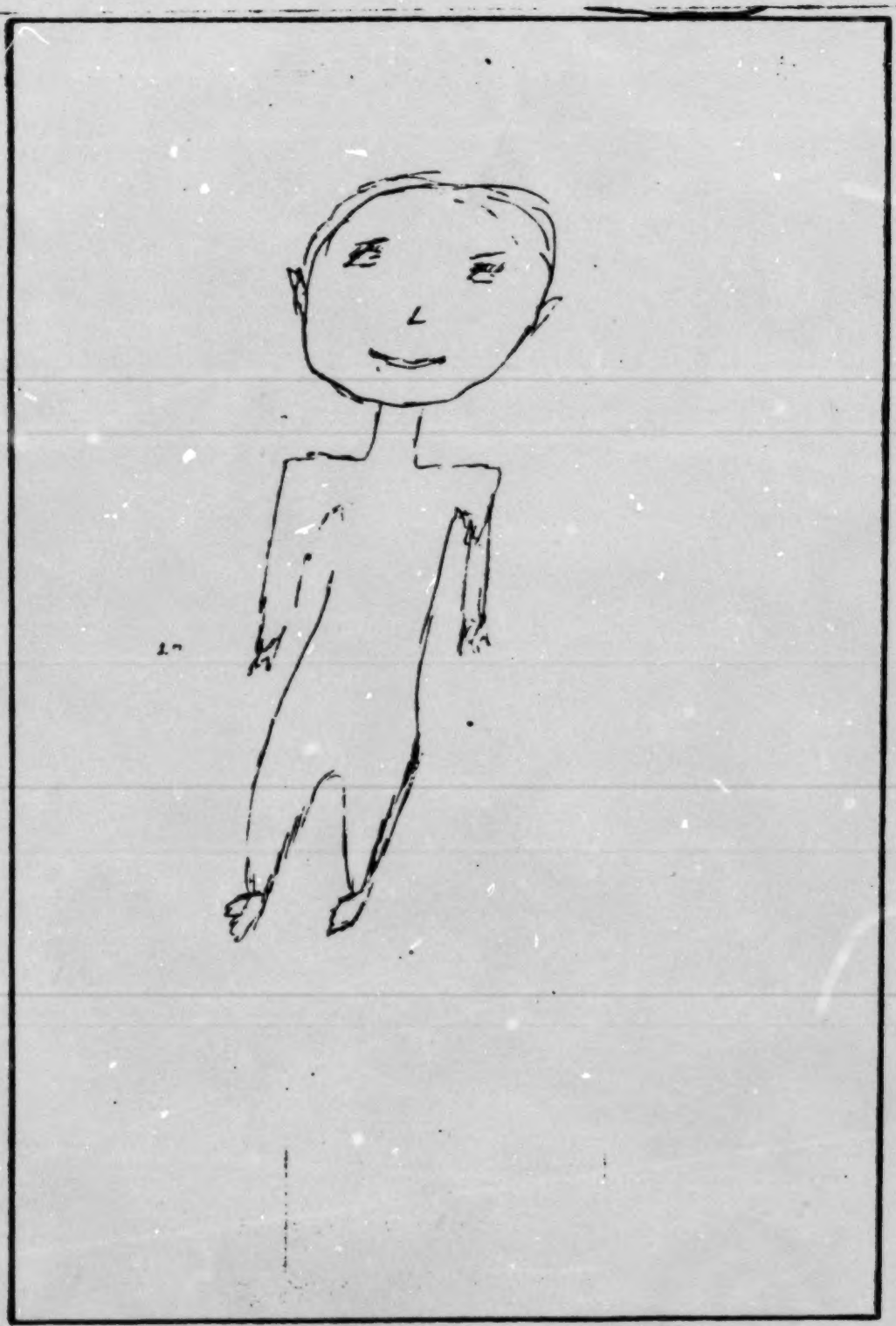


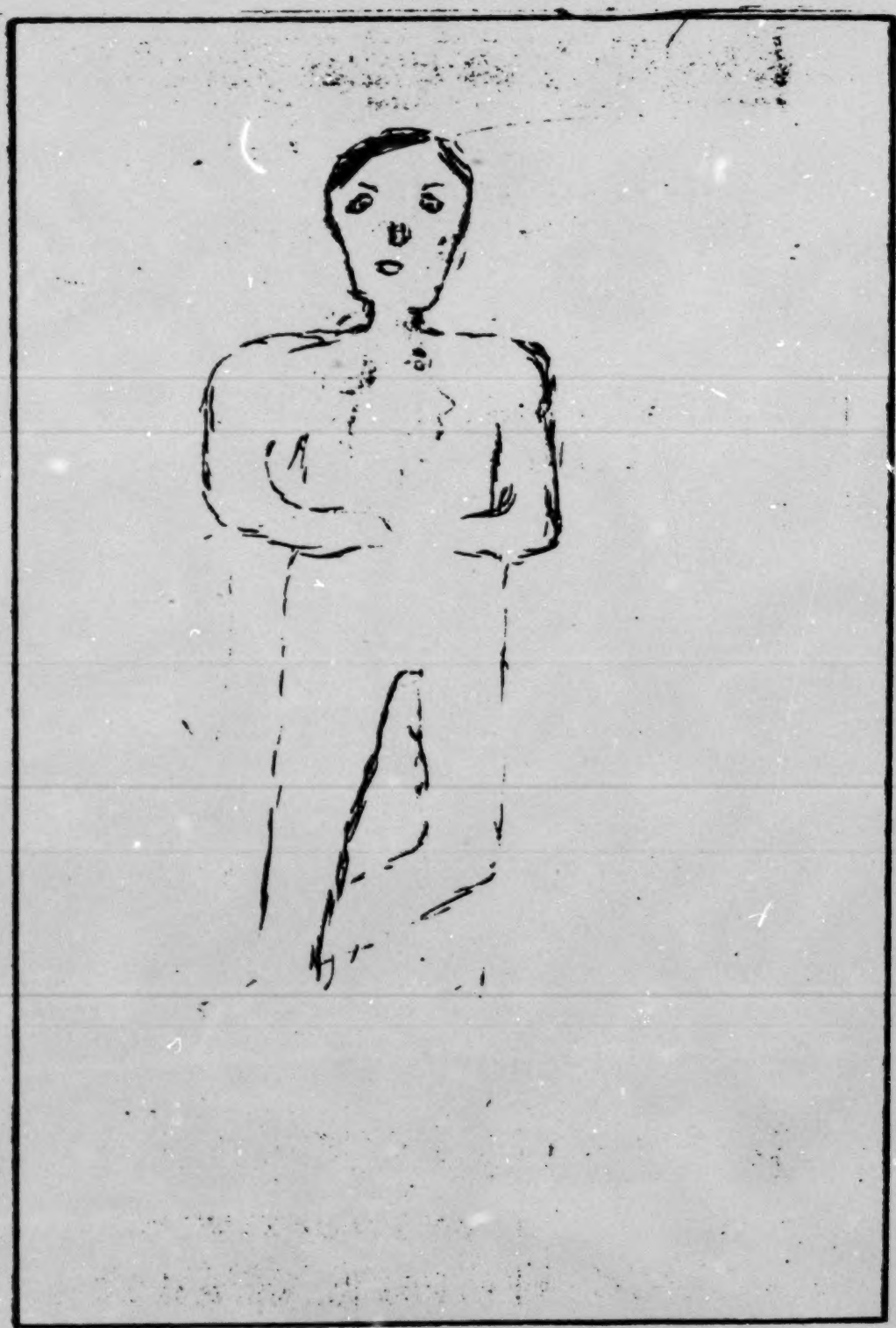

32



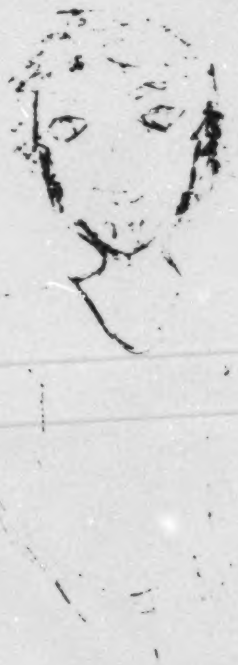
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



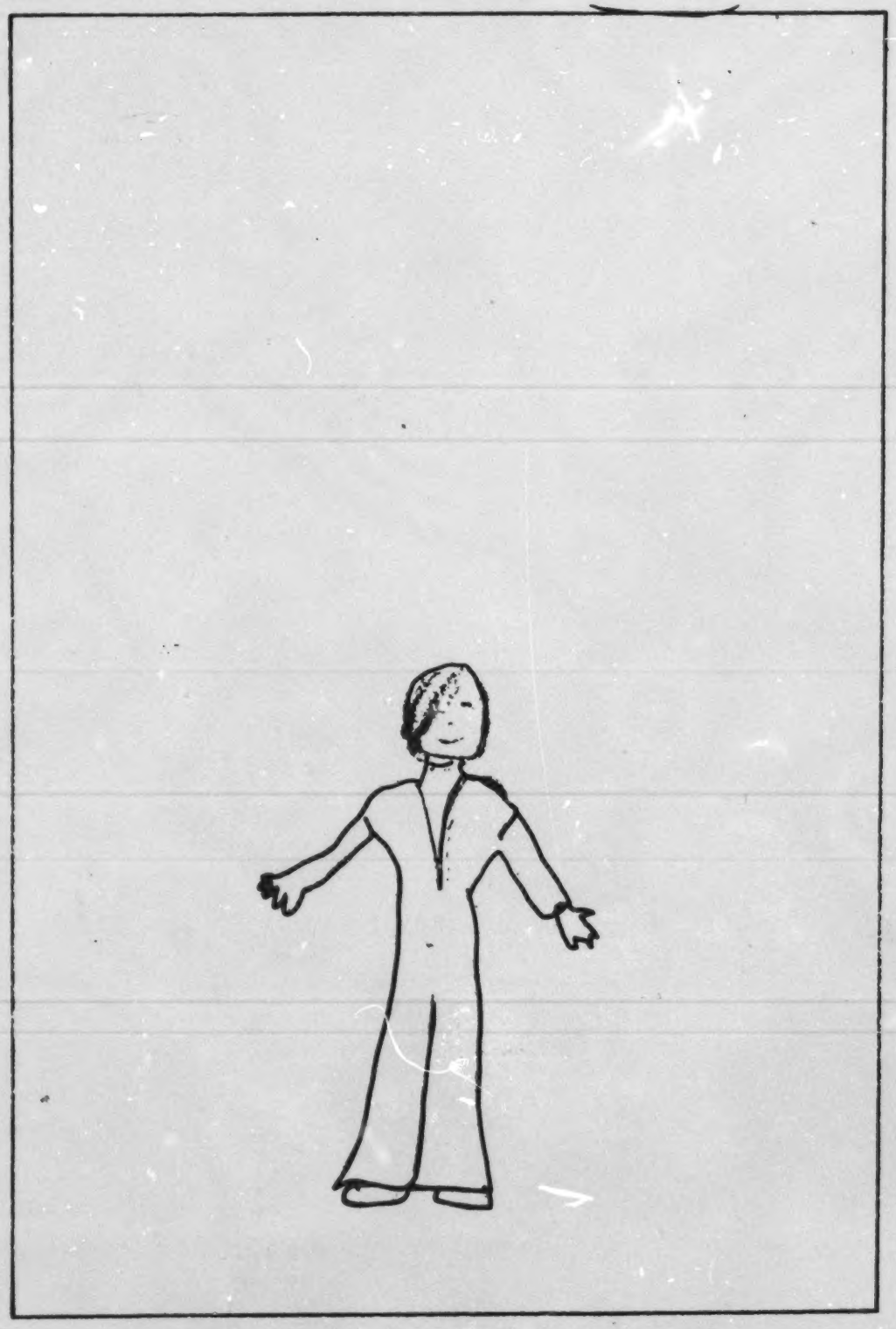


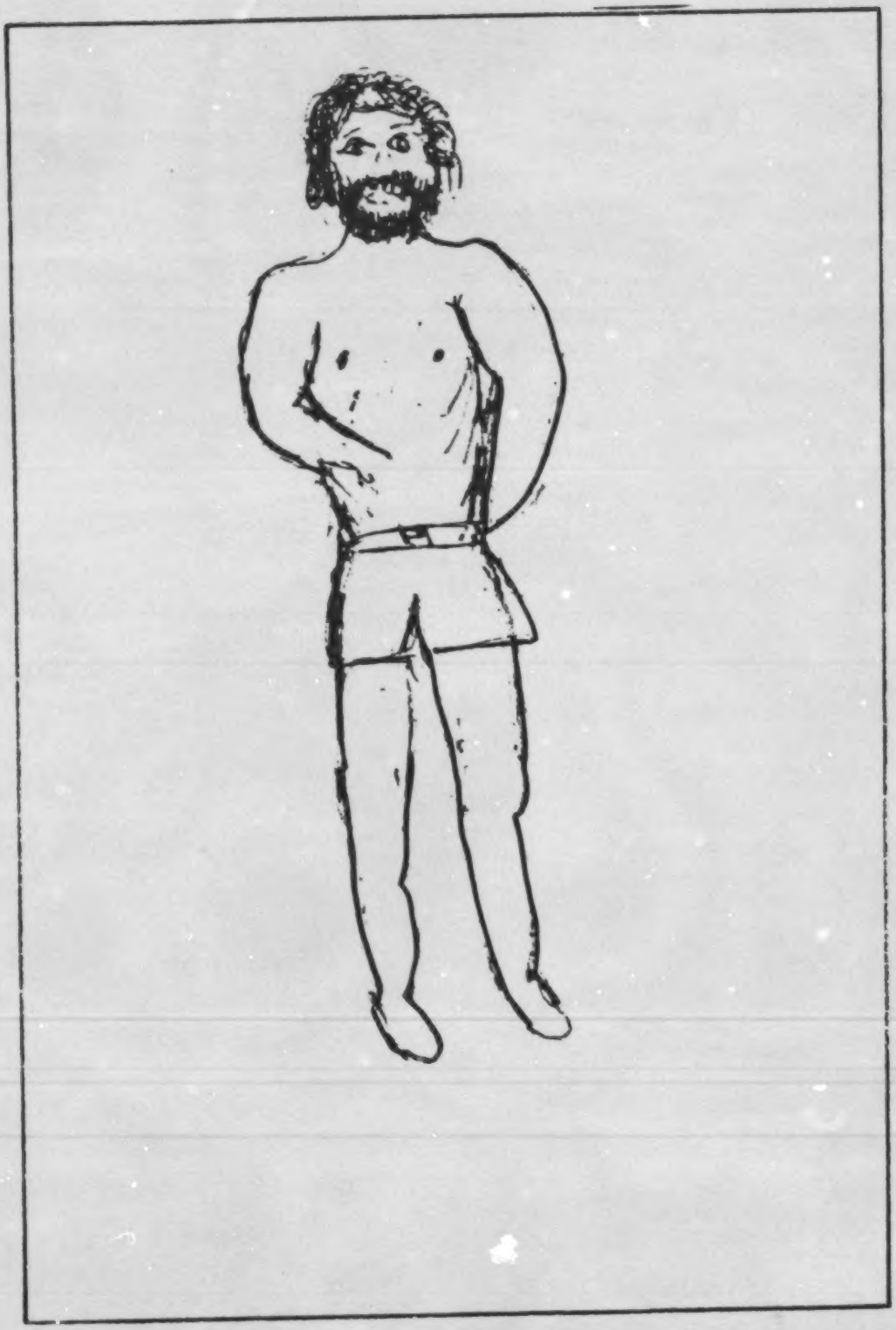


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

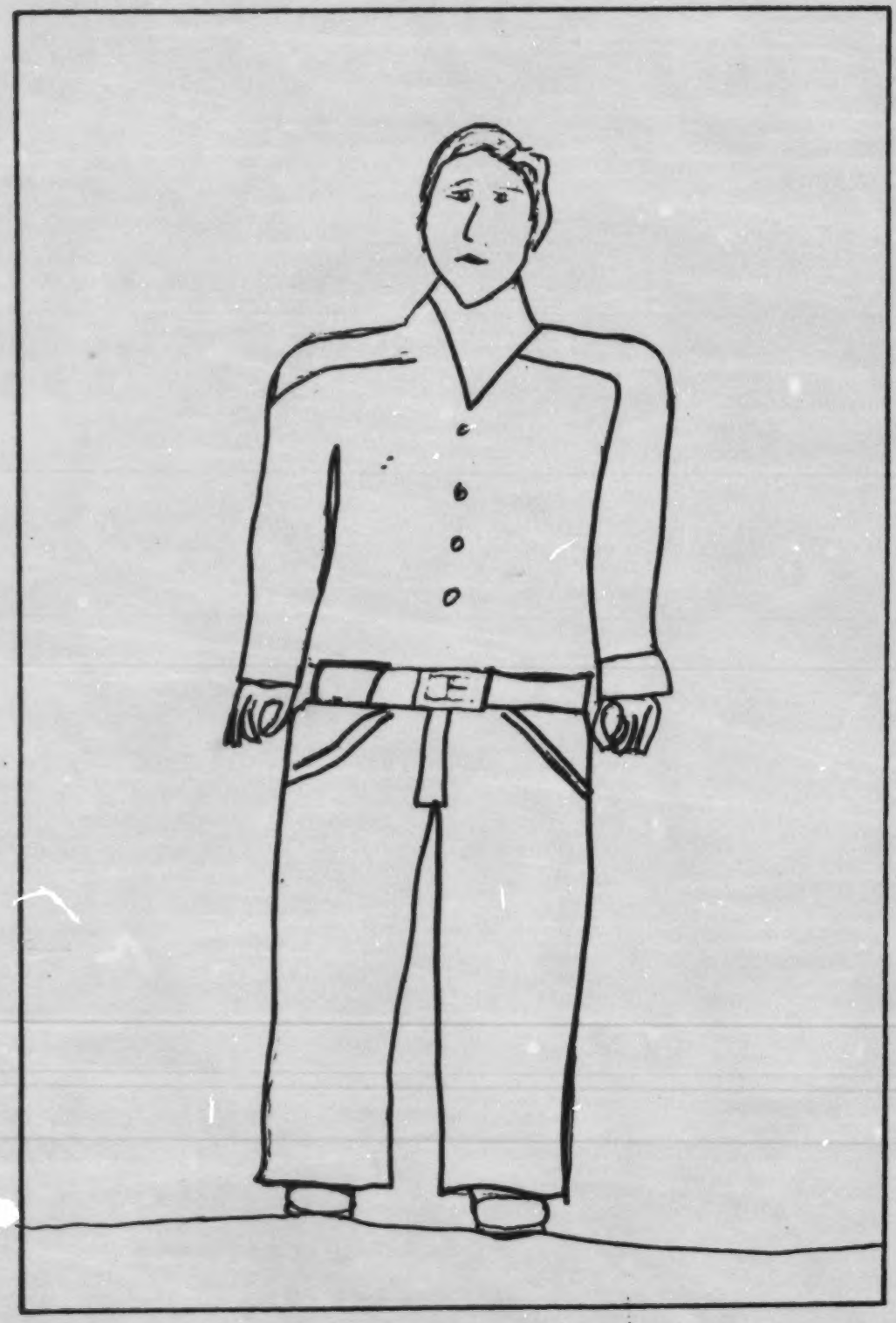


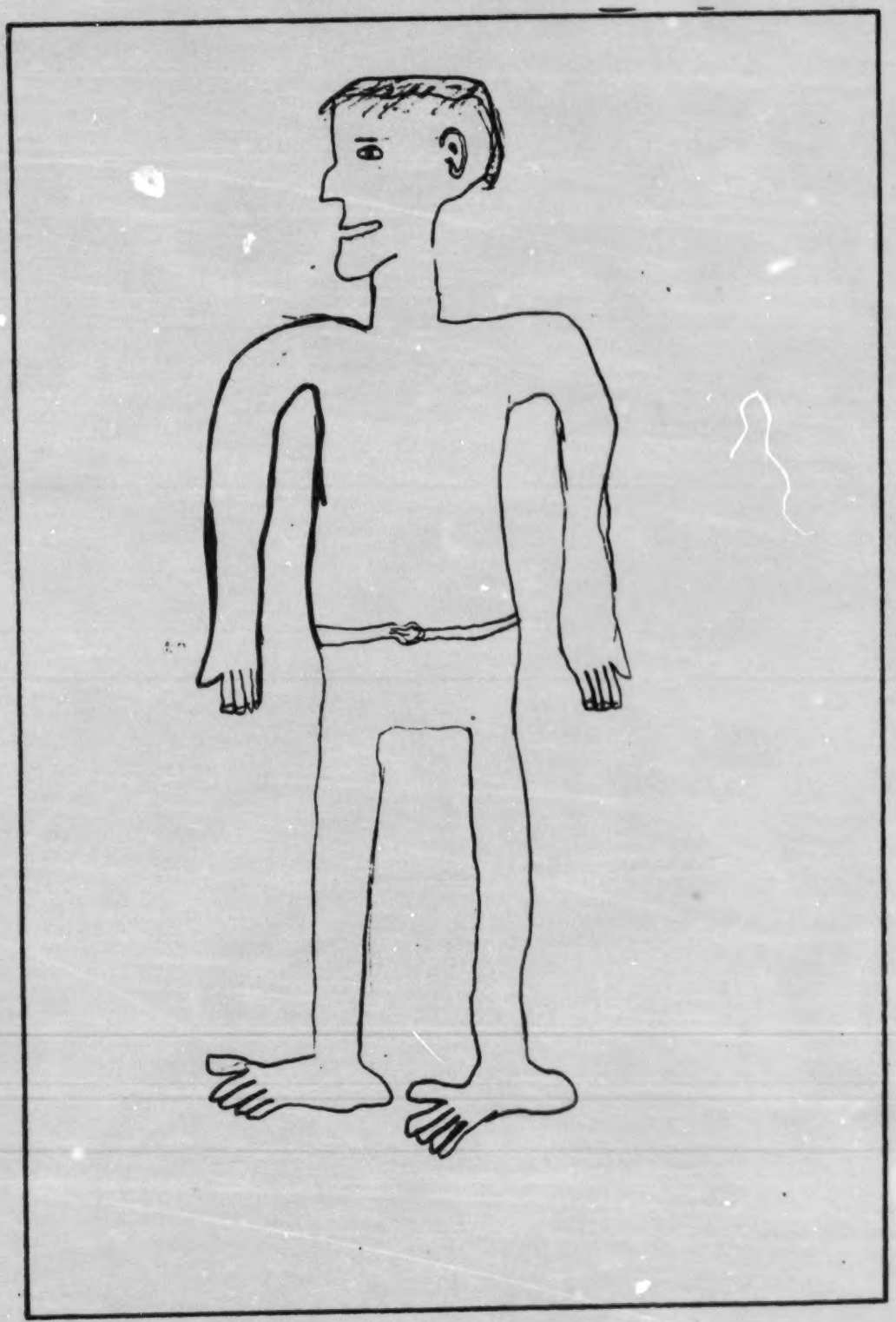
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

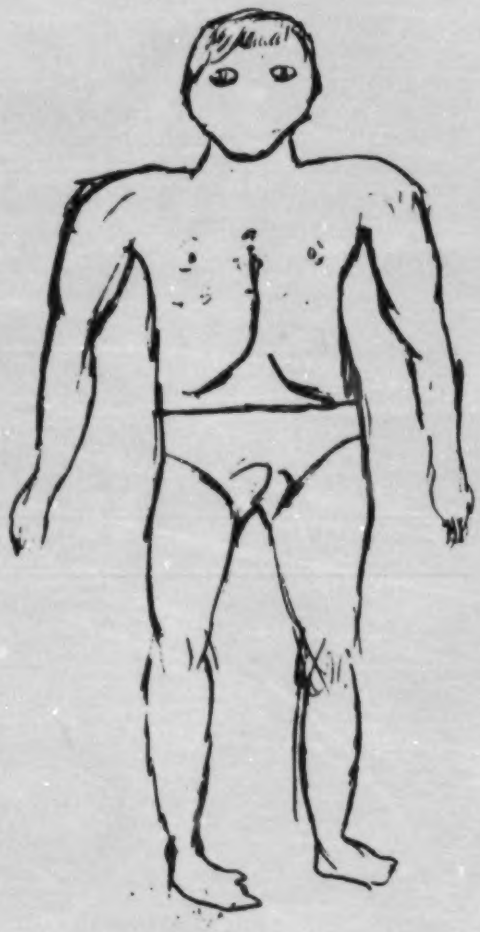




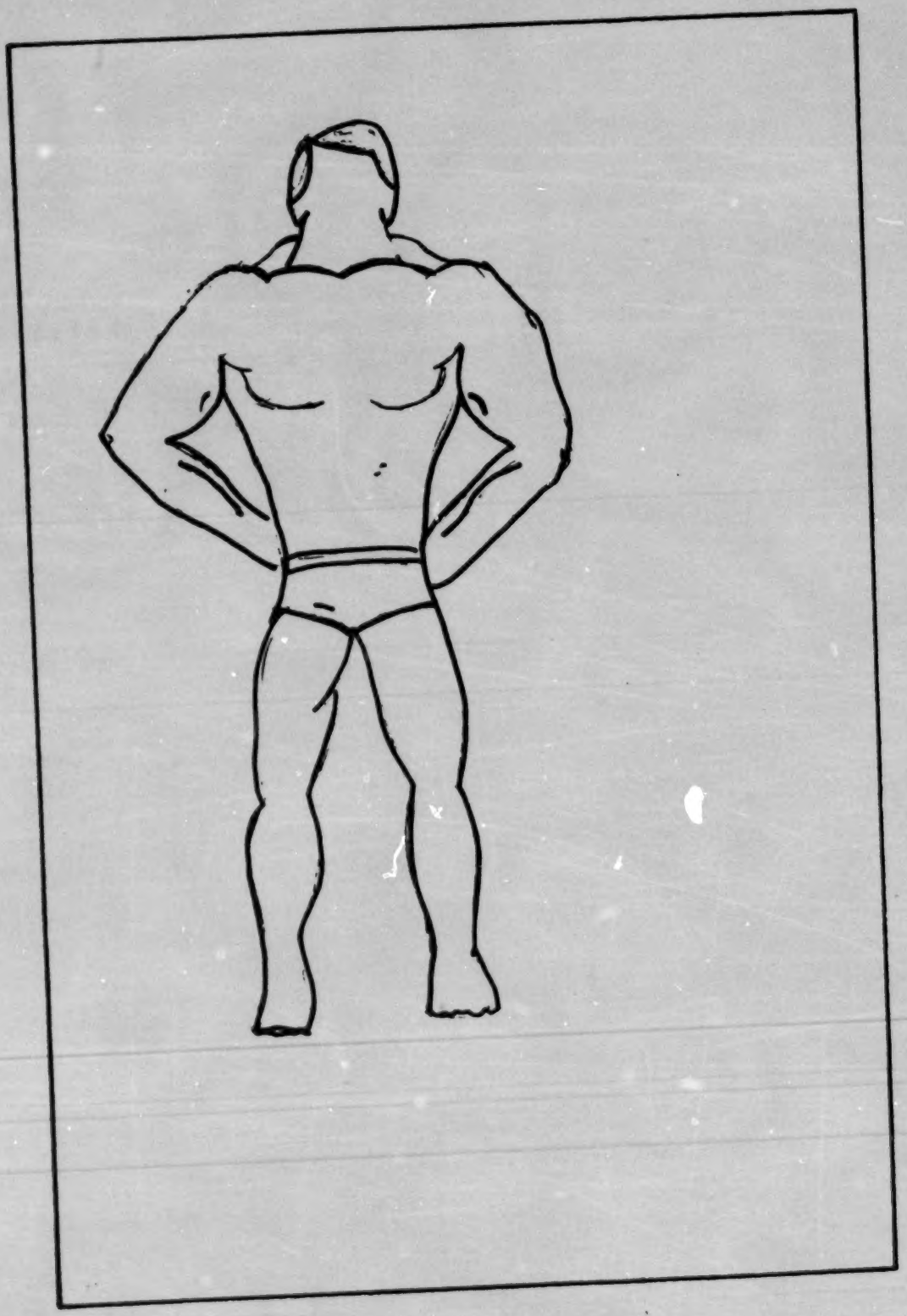
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



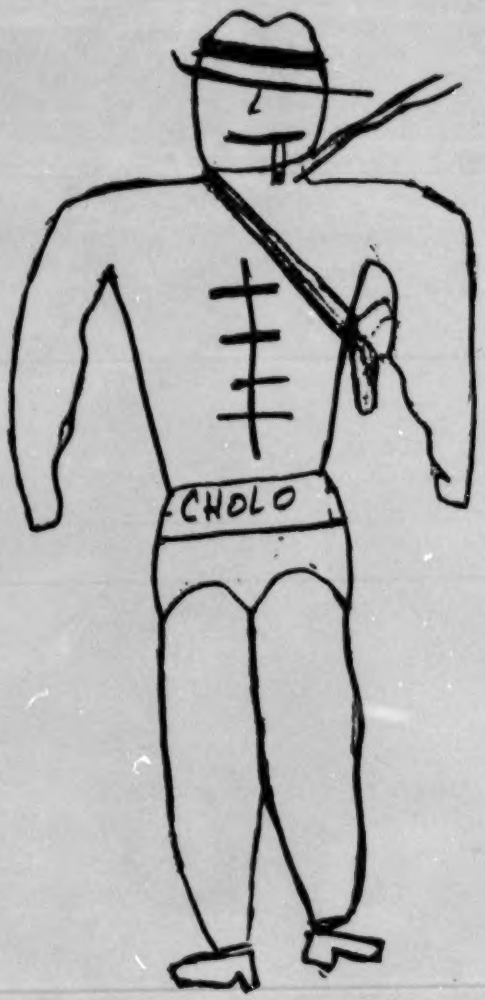




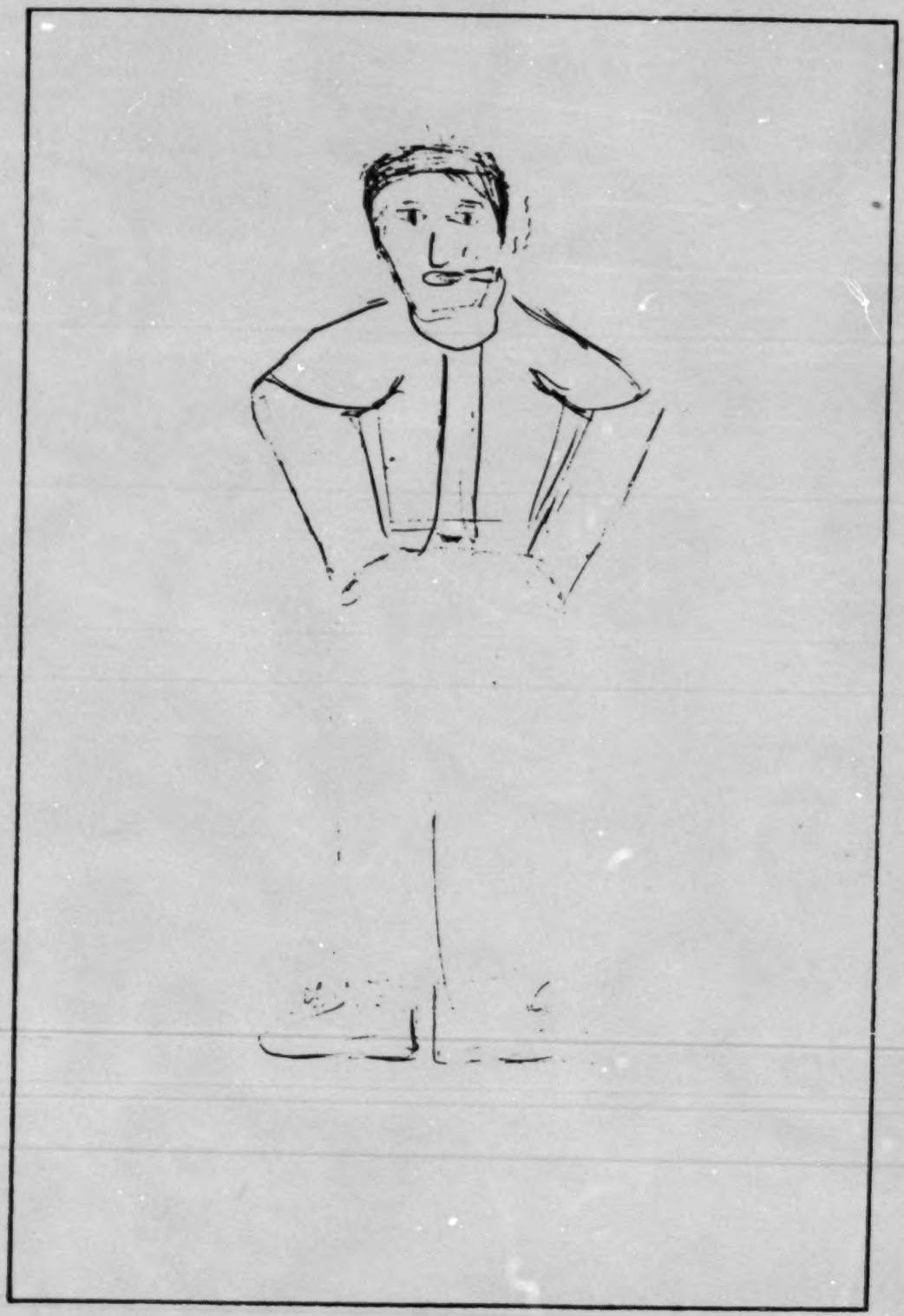
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



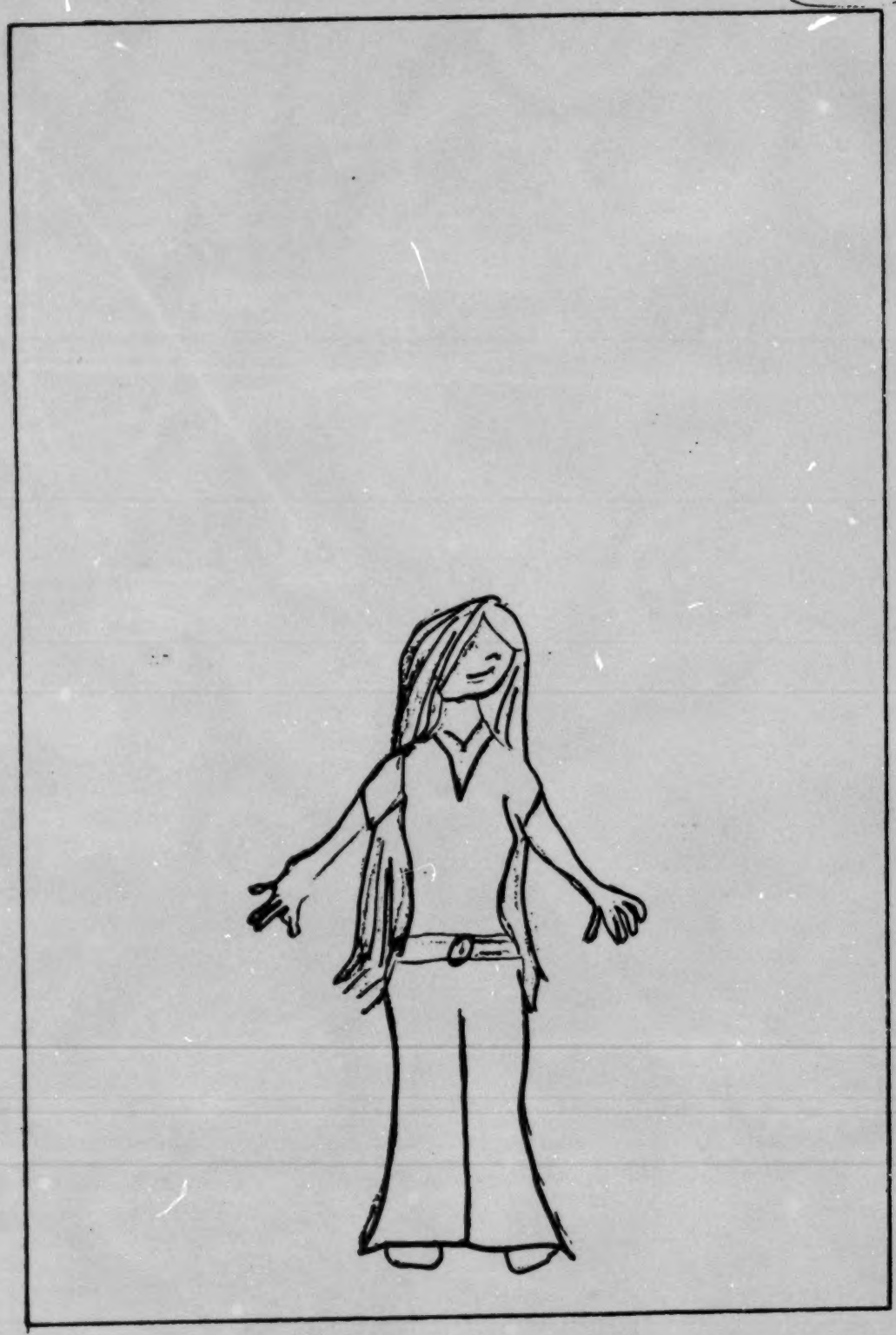
P.S. Give me a copy of THIS!



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

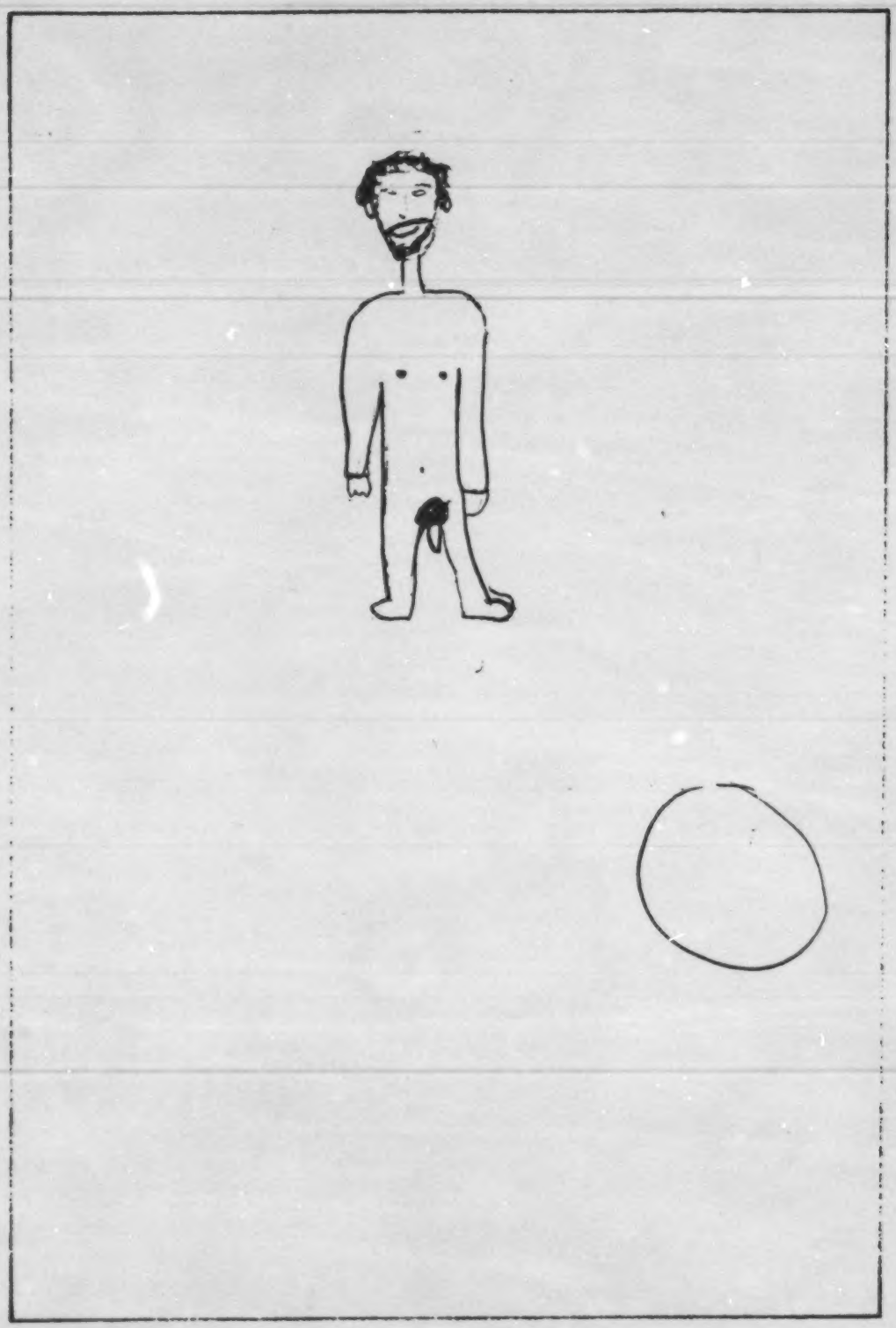


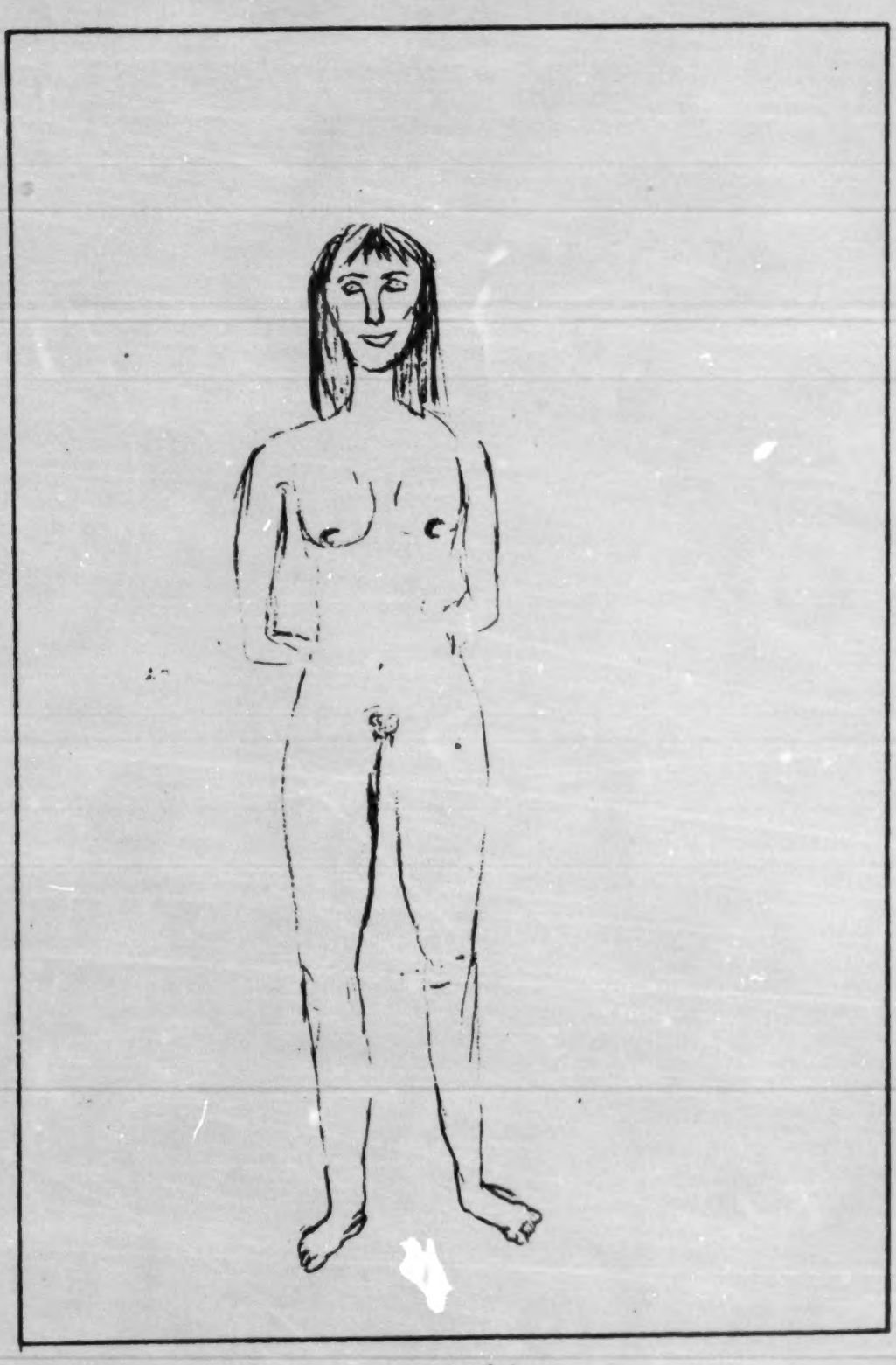
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



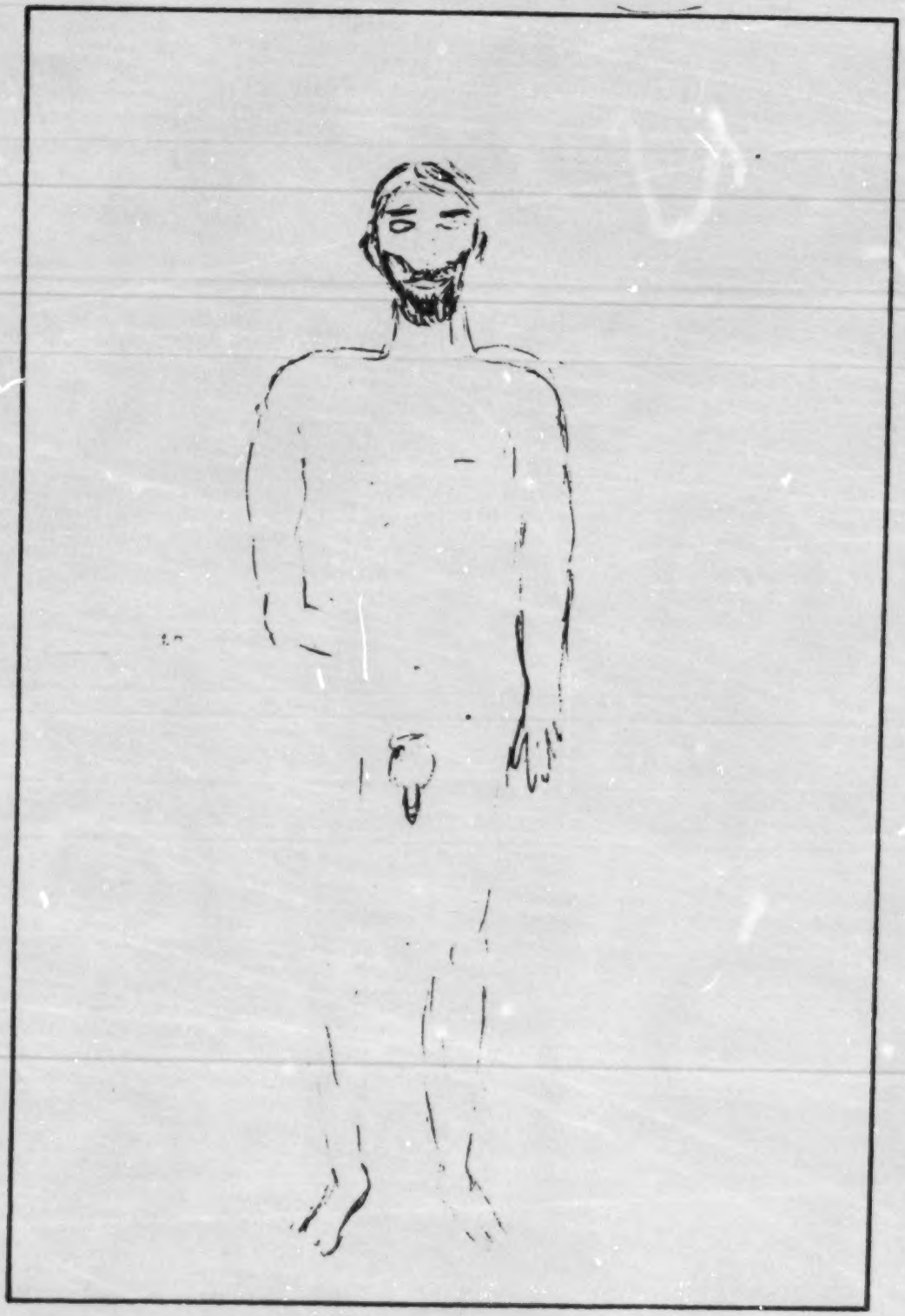
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

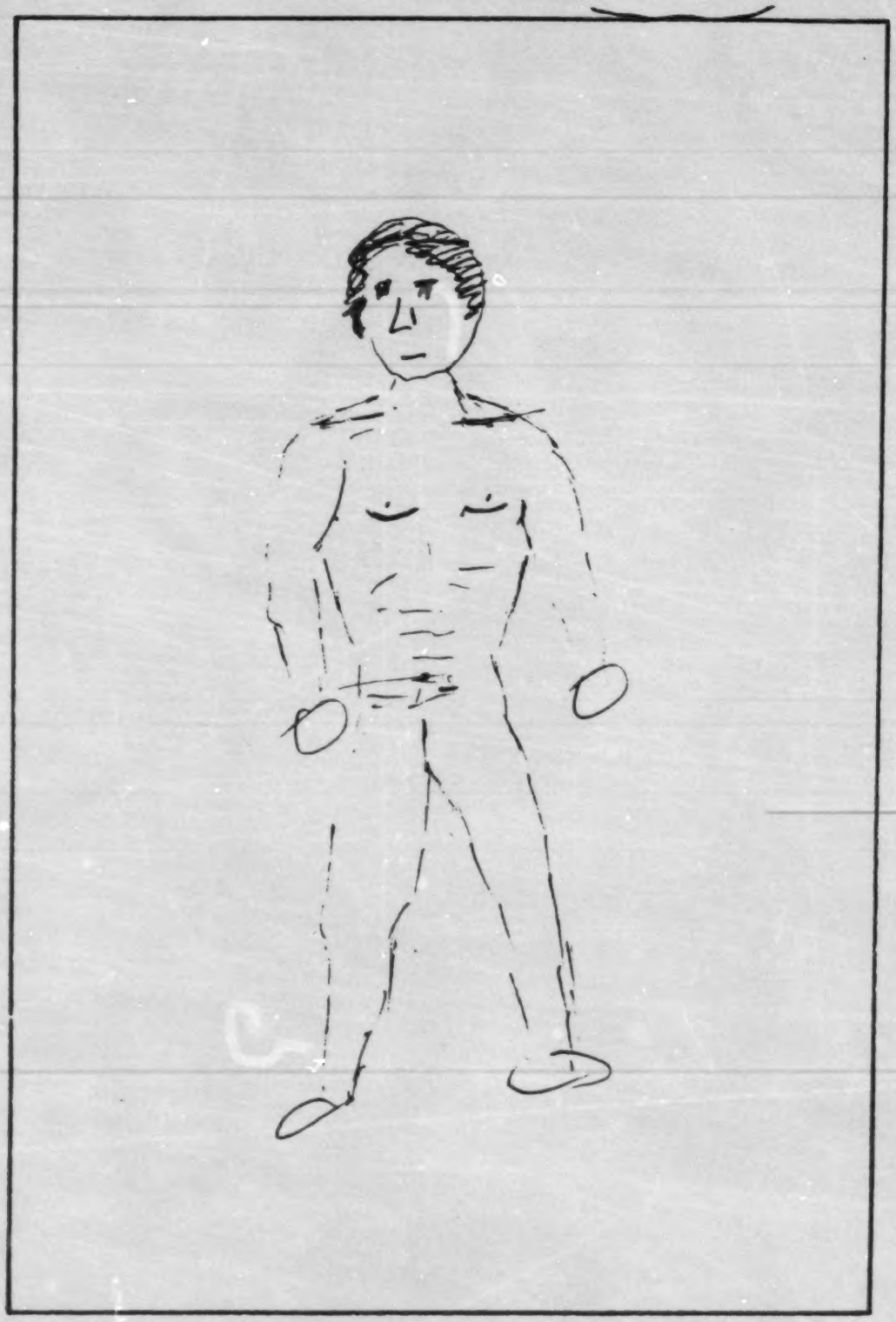
BEST COPY AVAILABLE





BEST COPY AVAILABLE

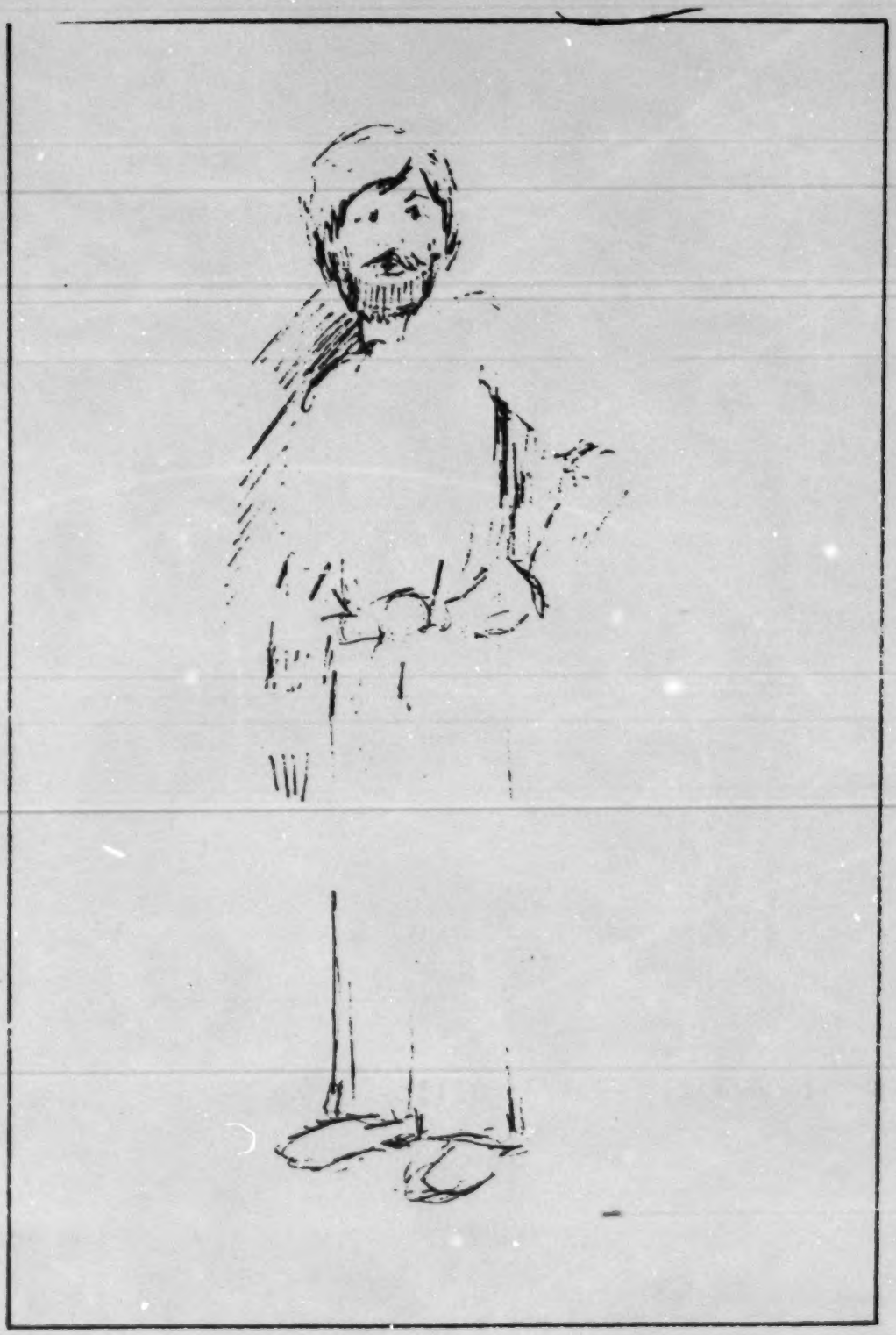




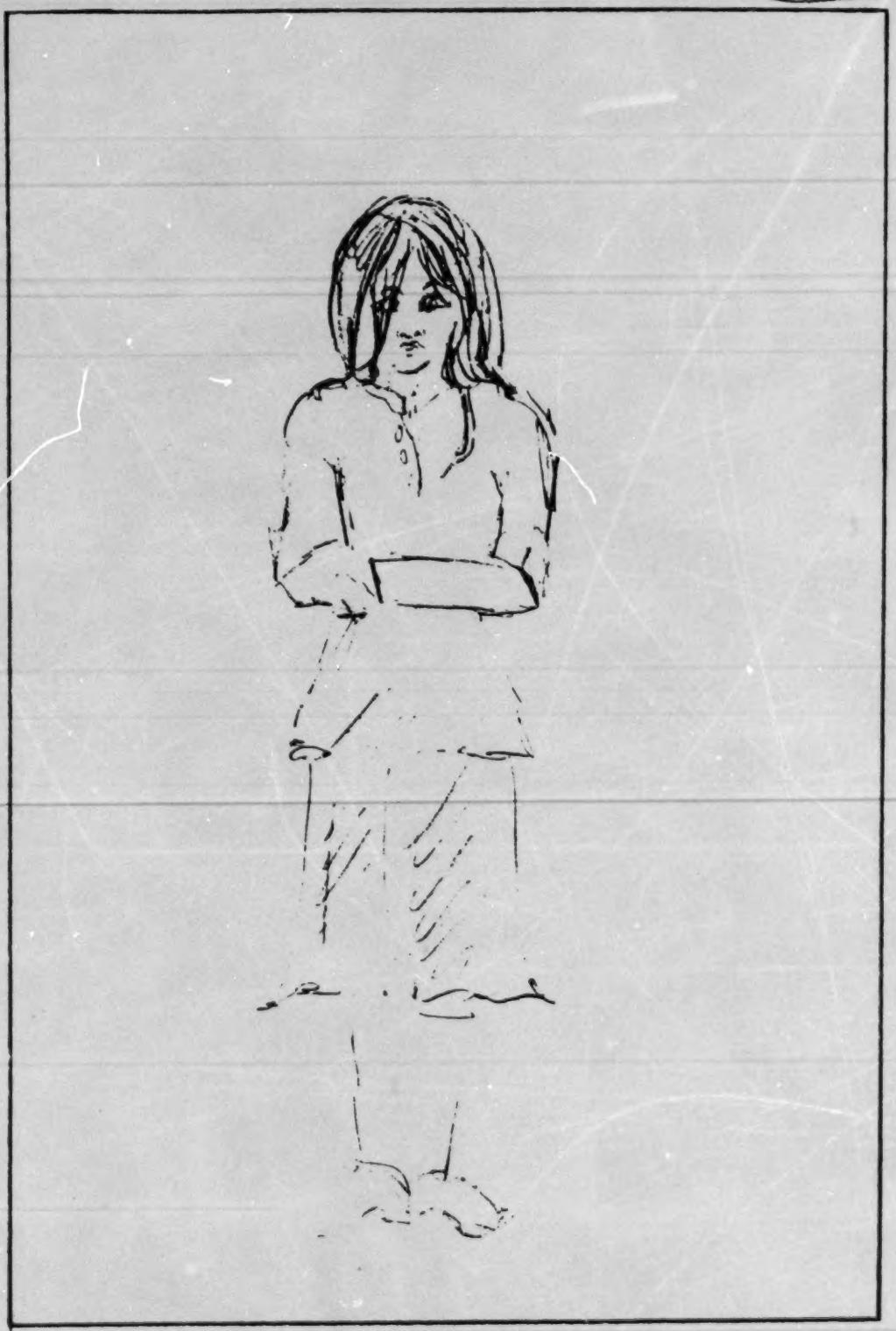
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

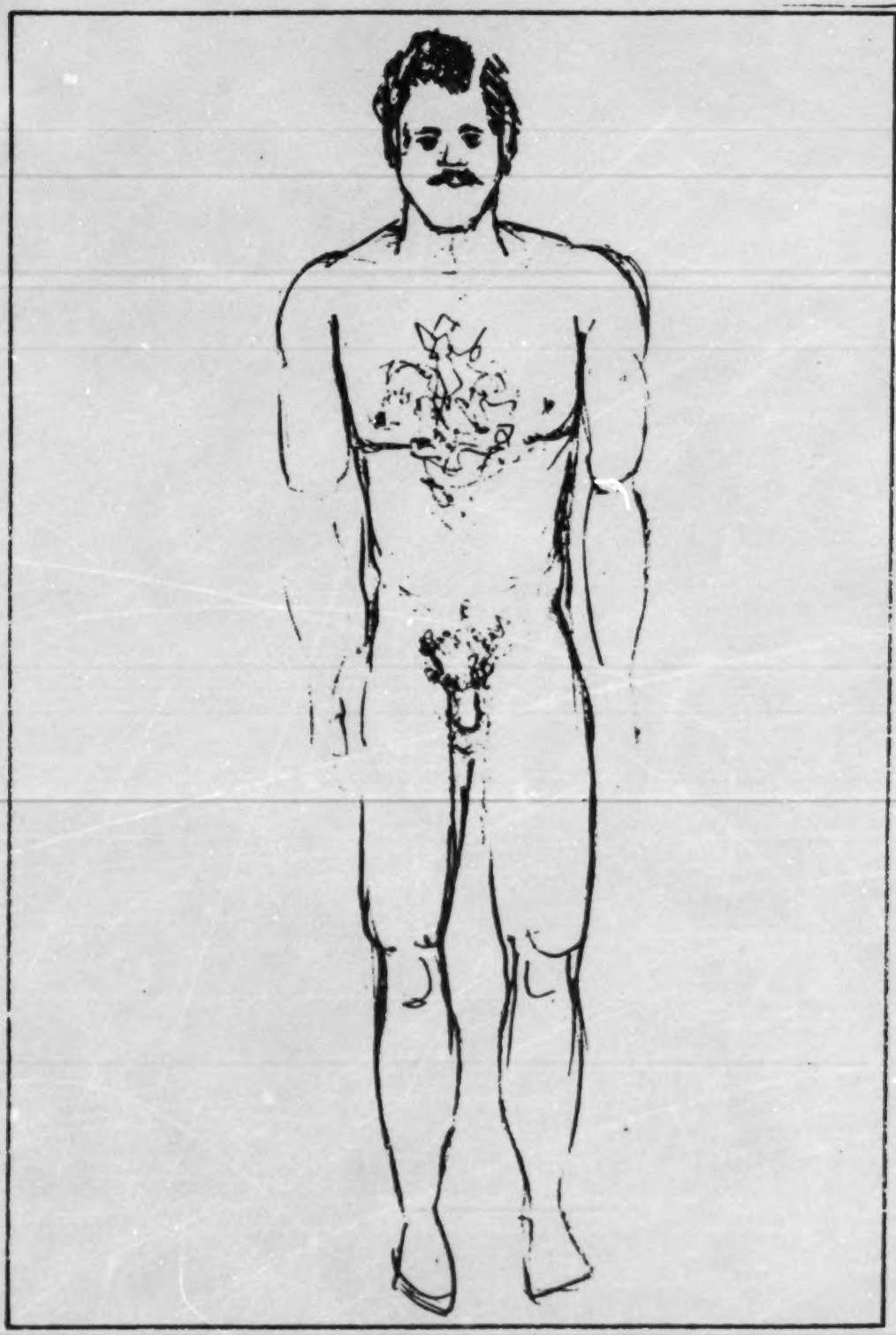
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

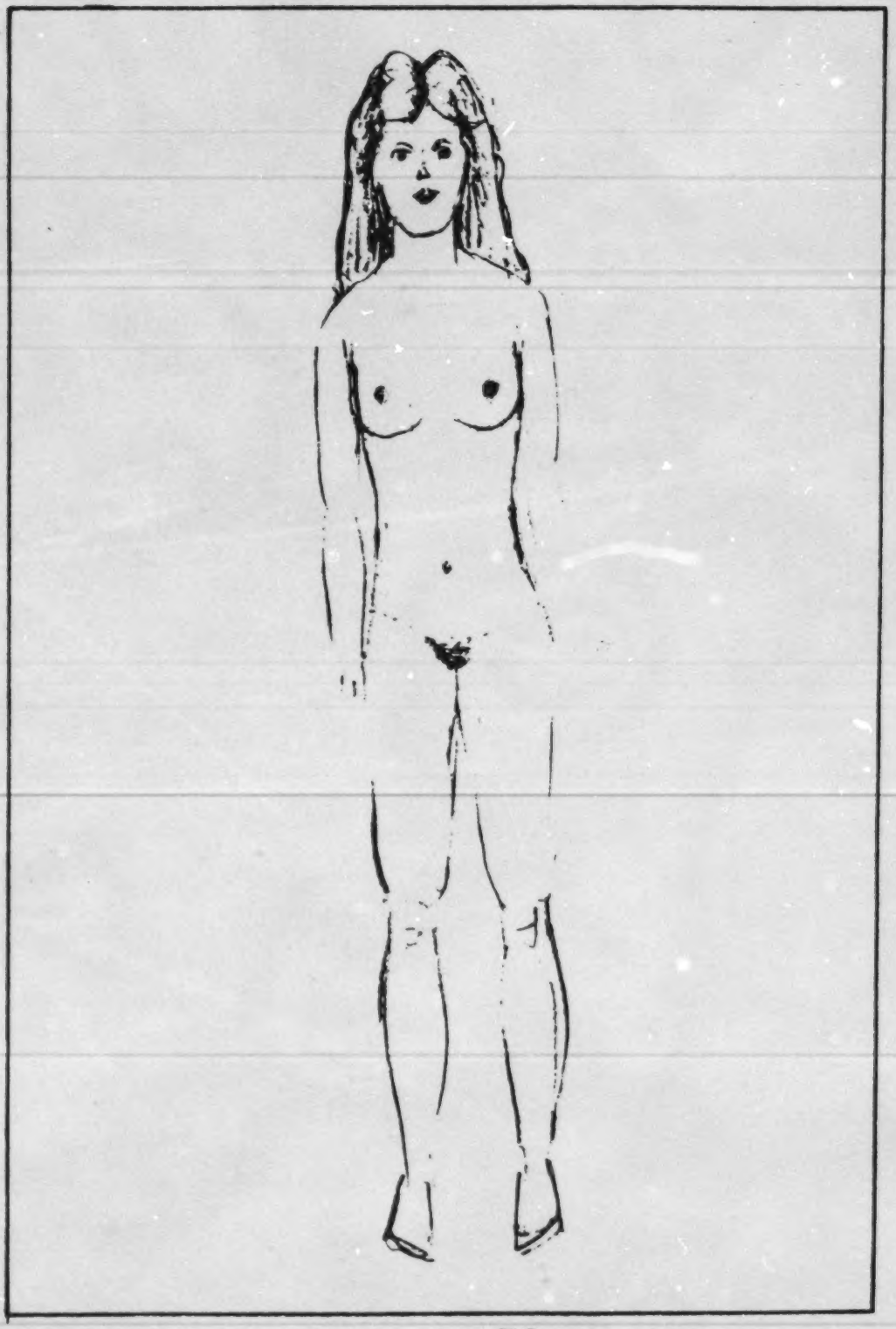
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

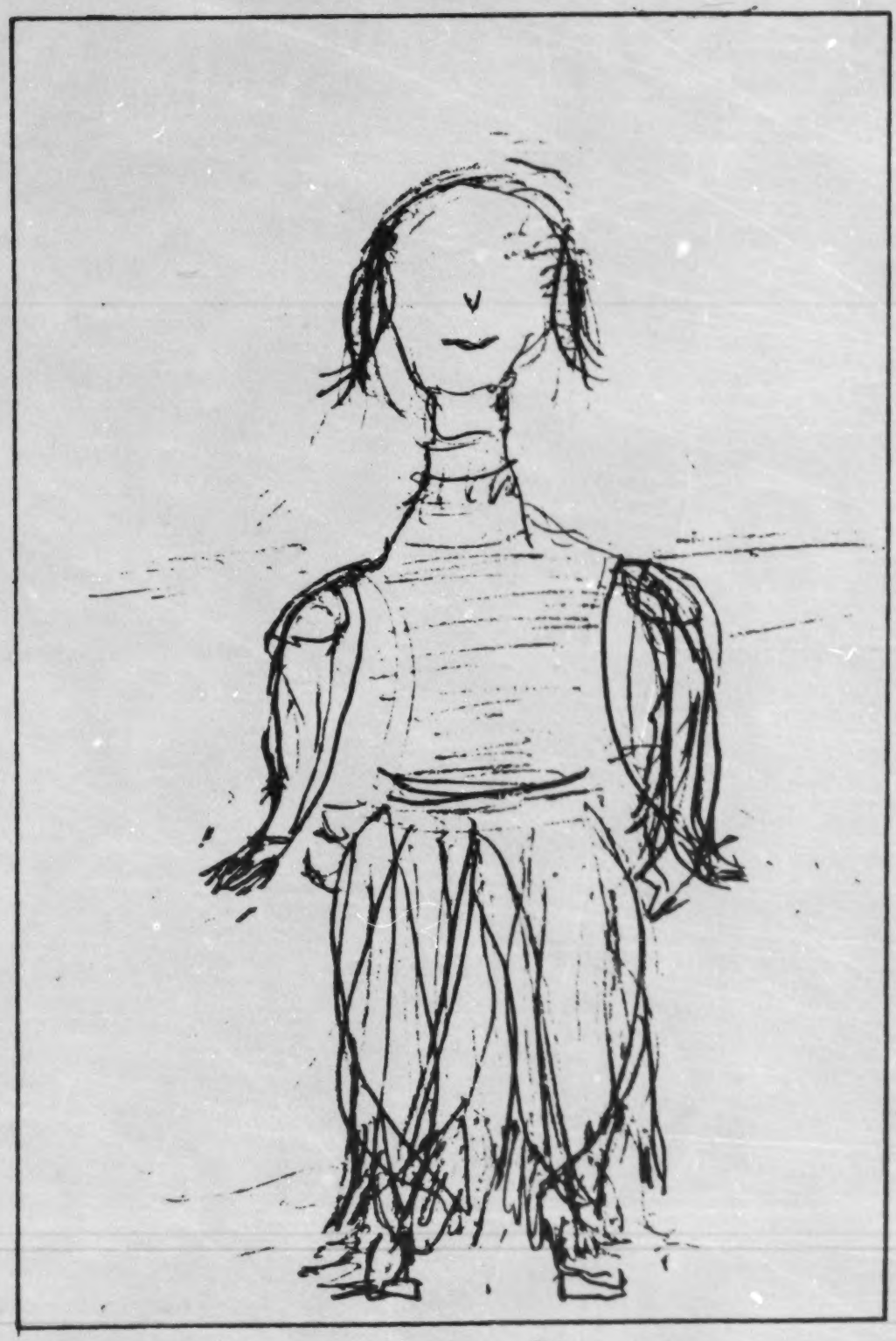




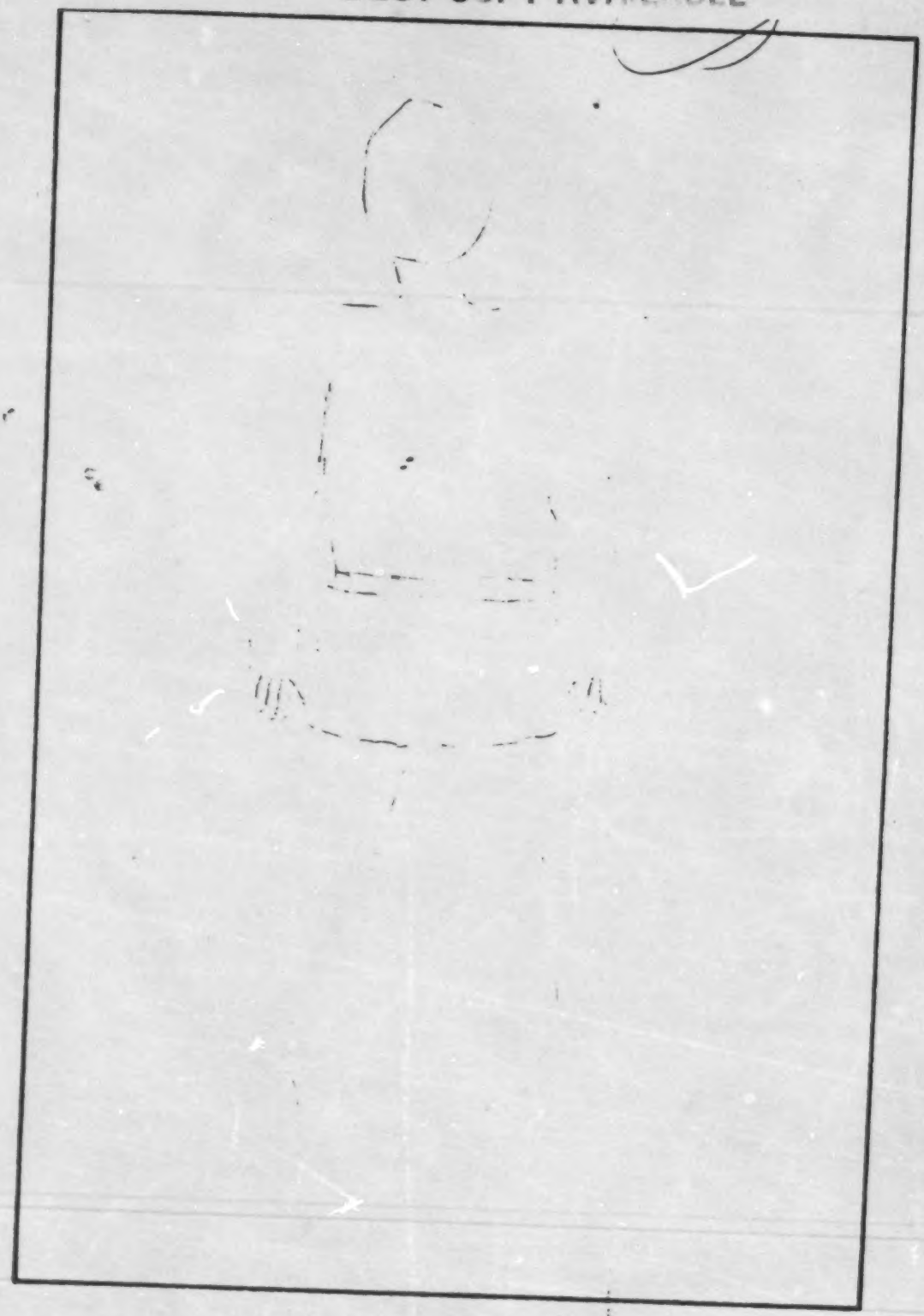


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

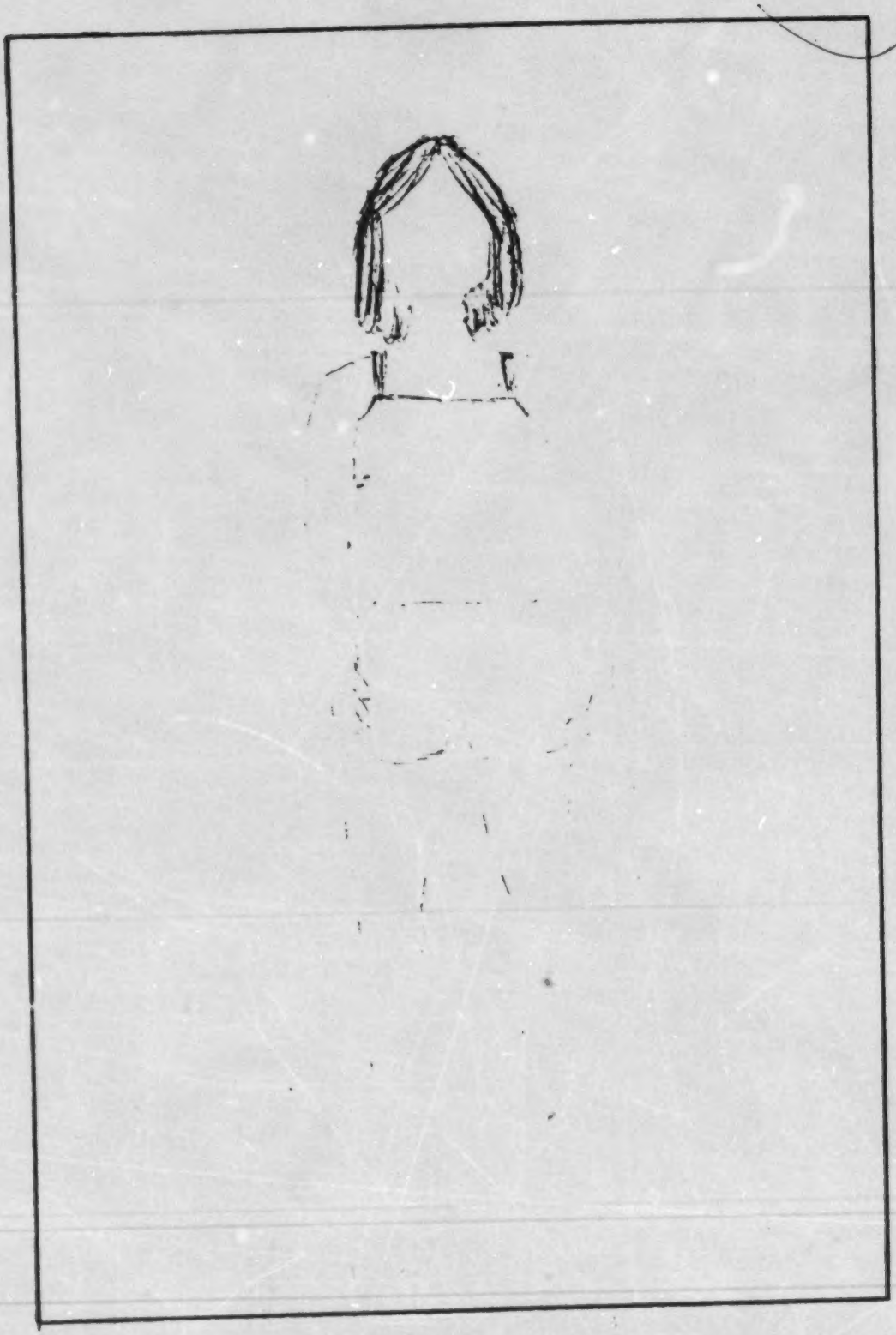
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



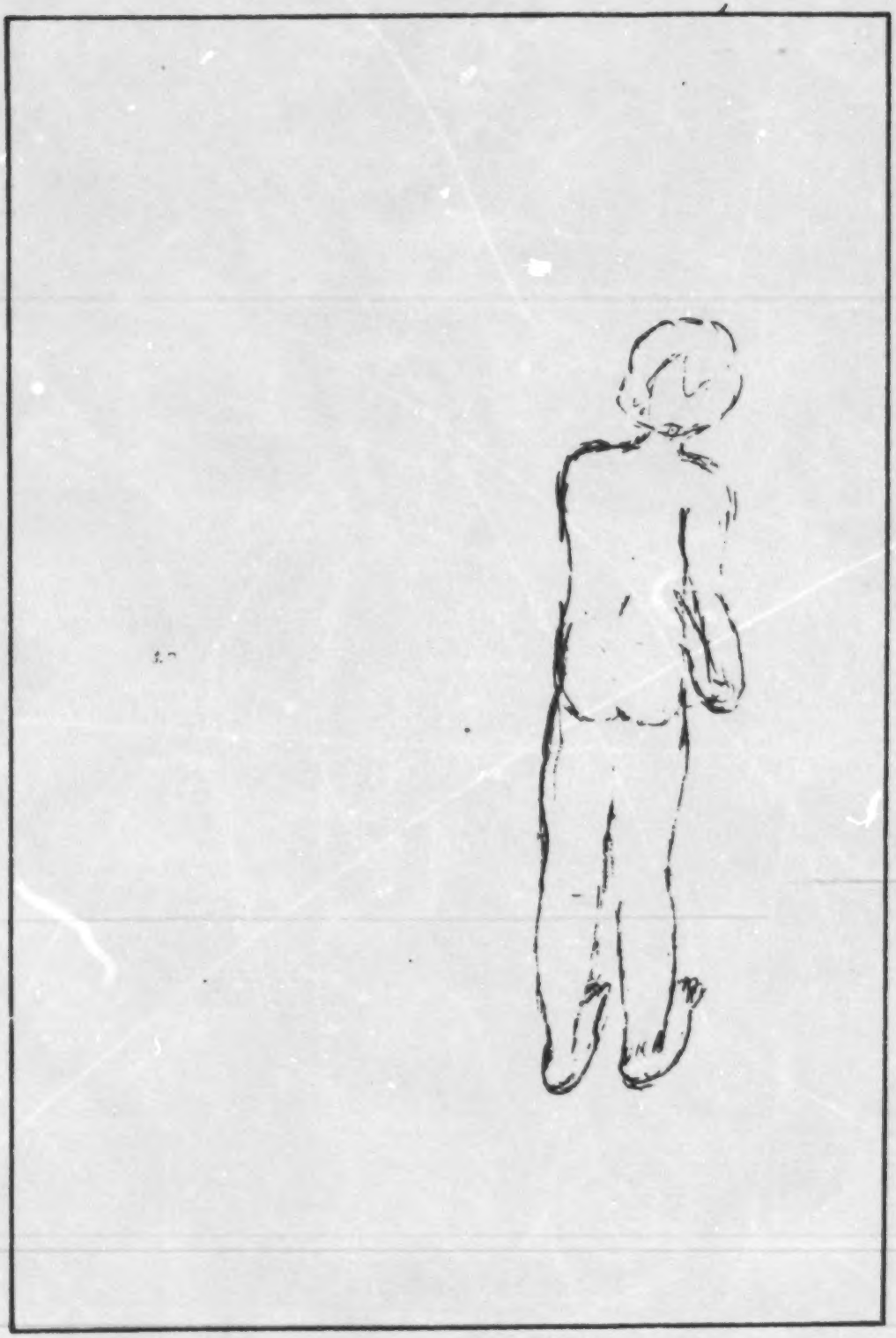
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



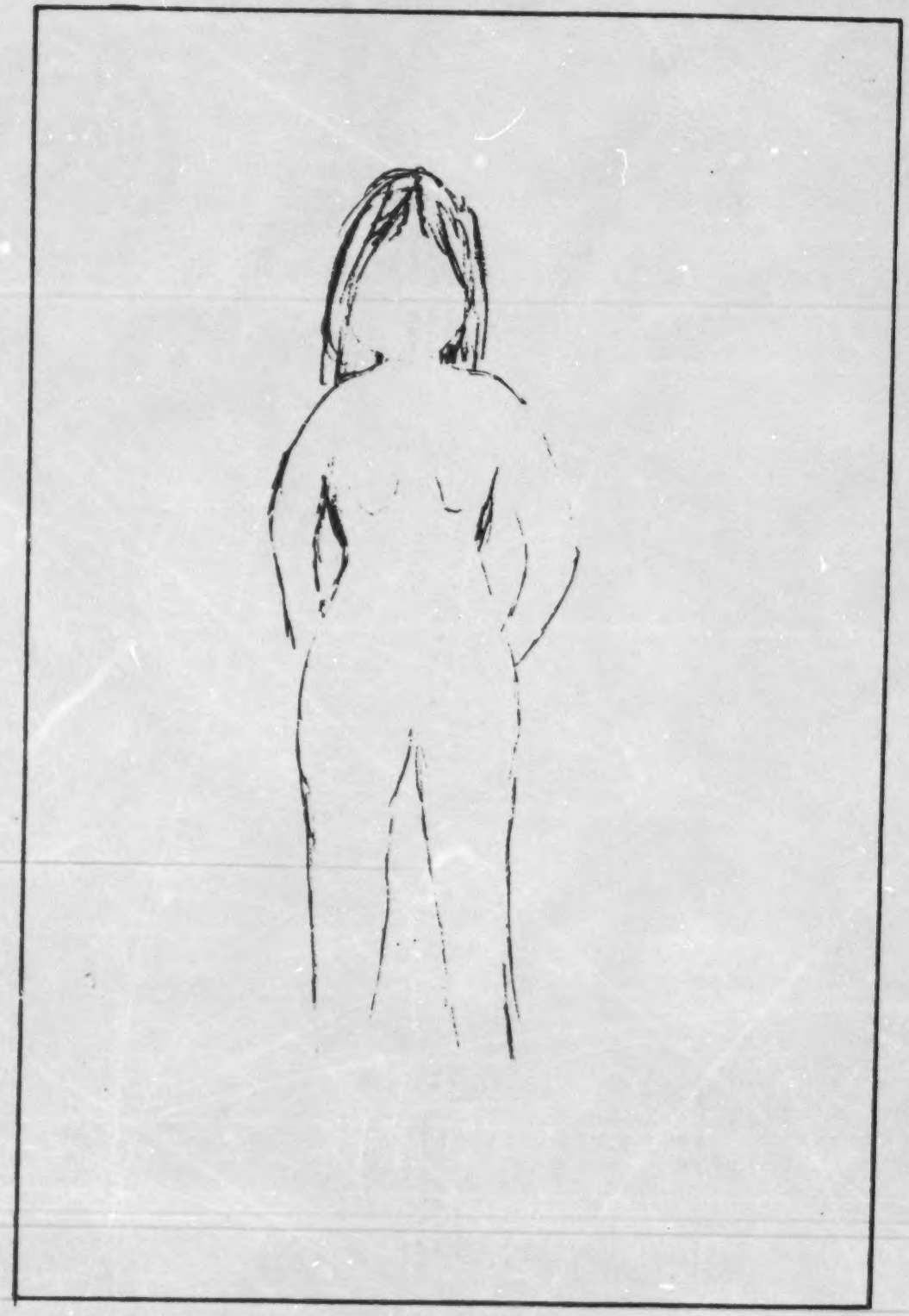
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



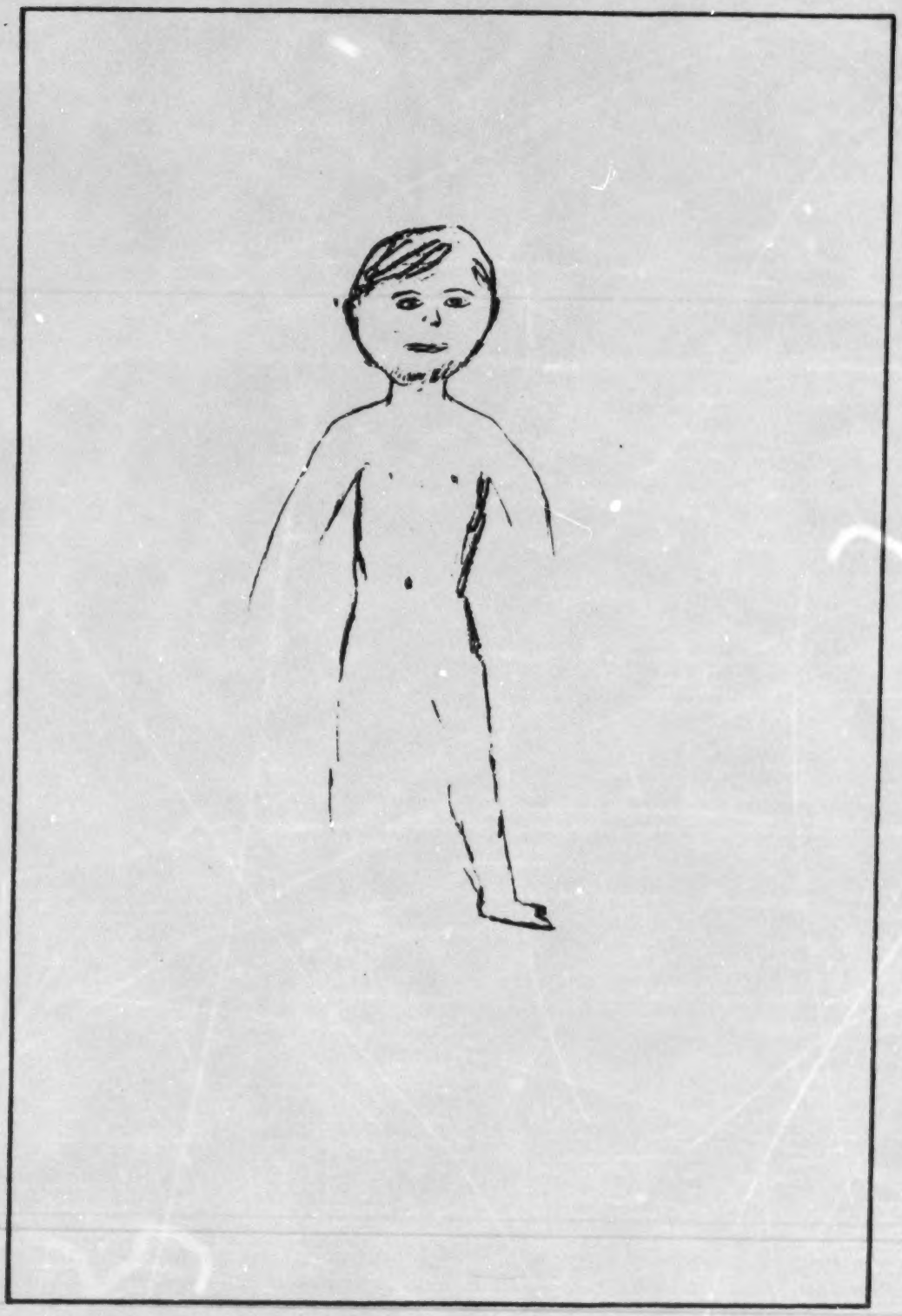
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

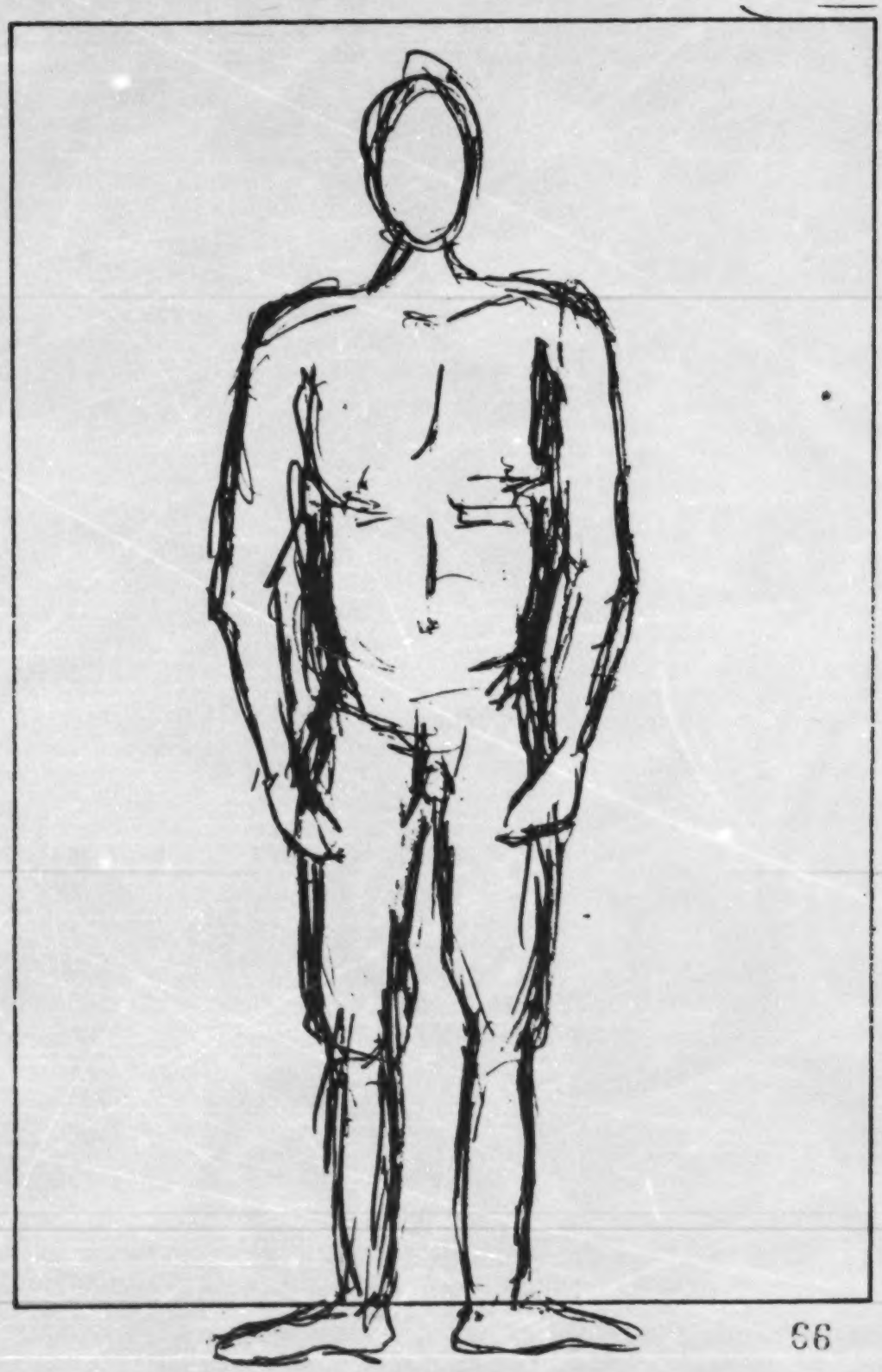


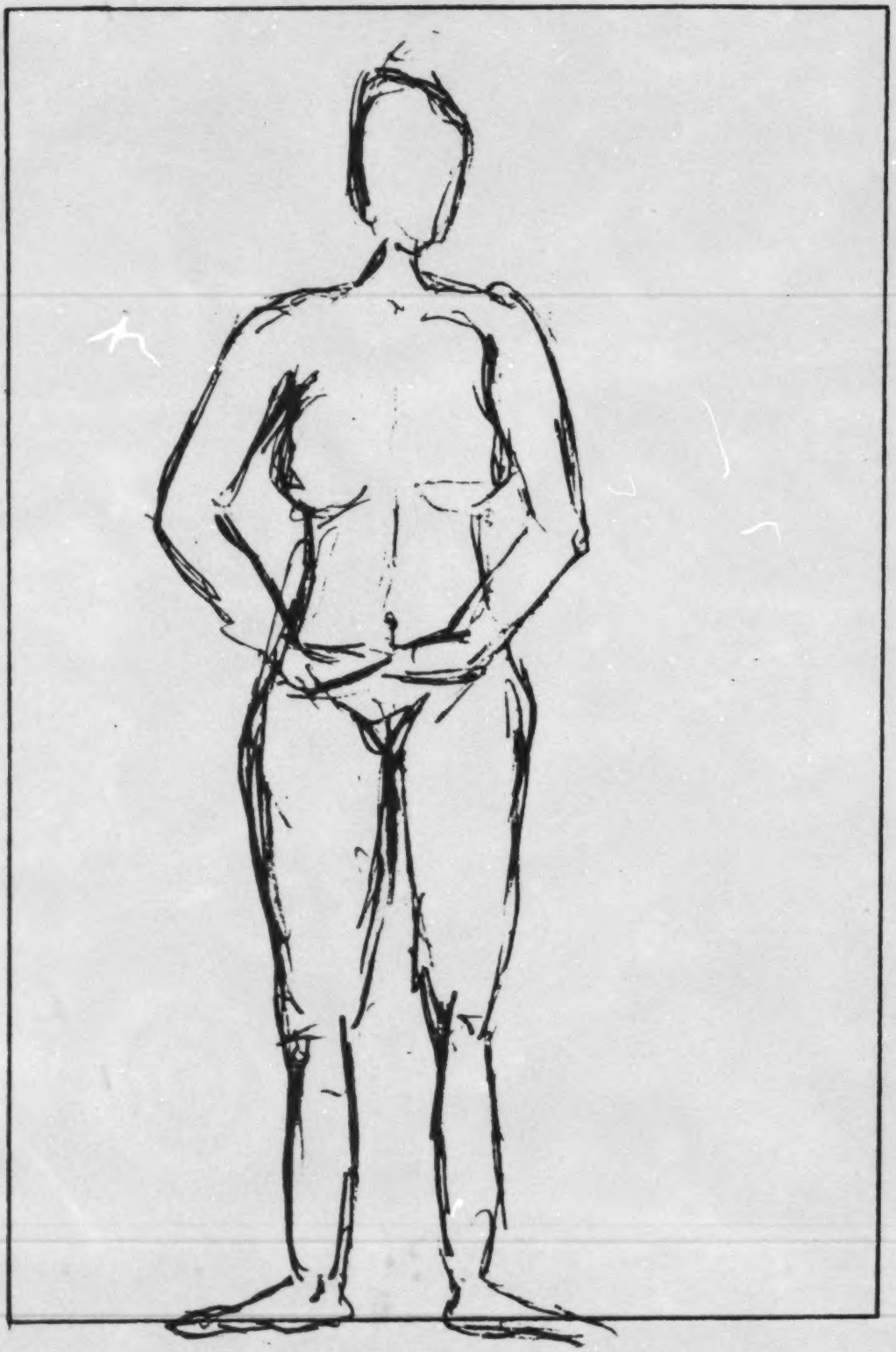
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



BEST COPY AVAILABLE



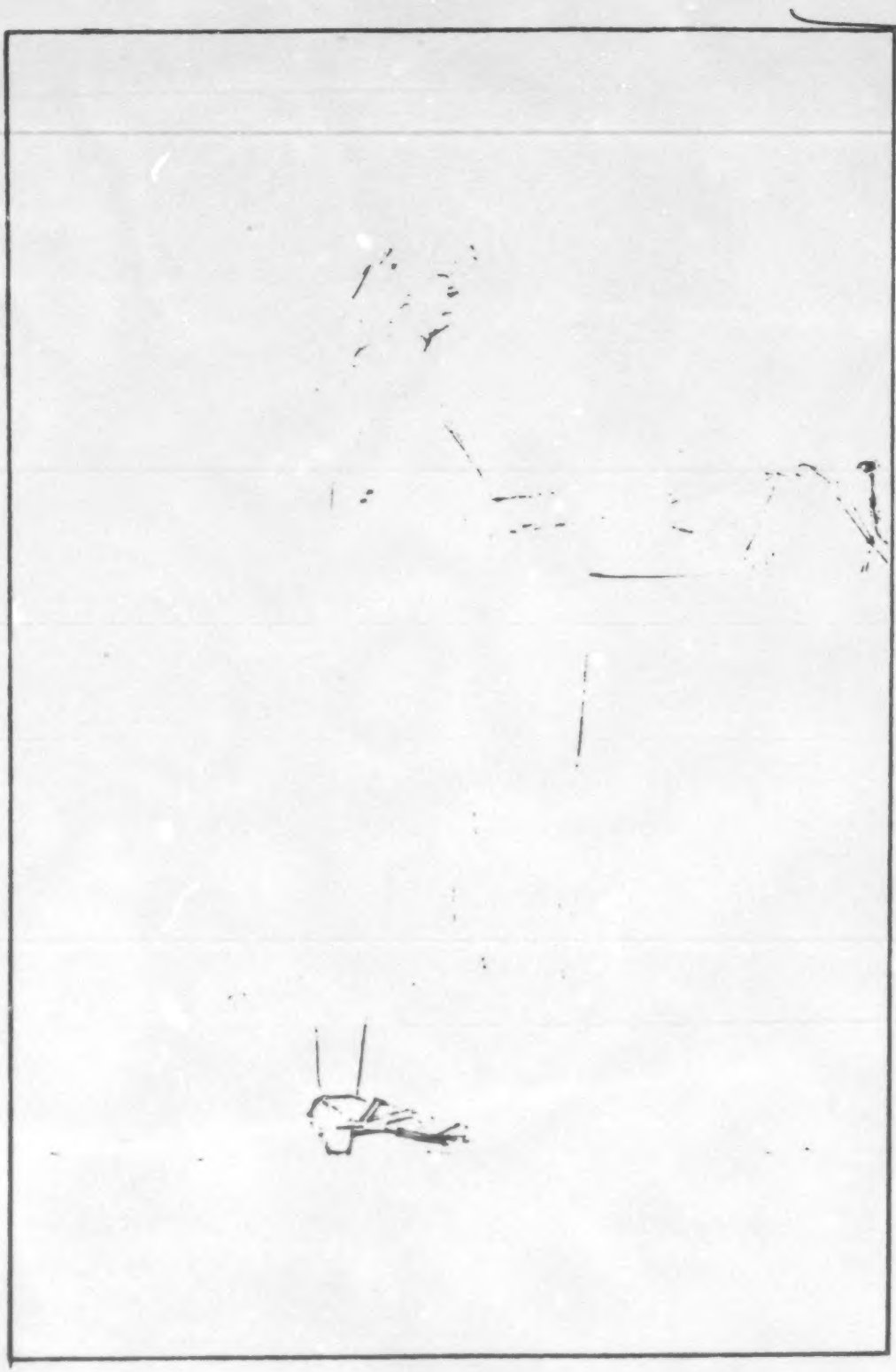


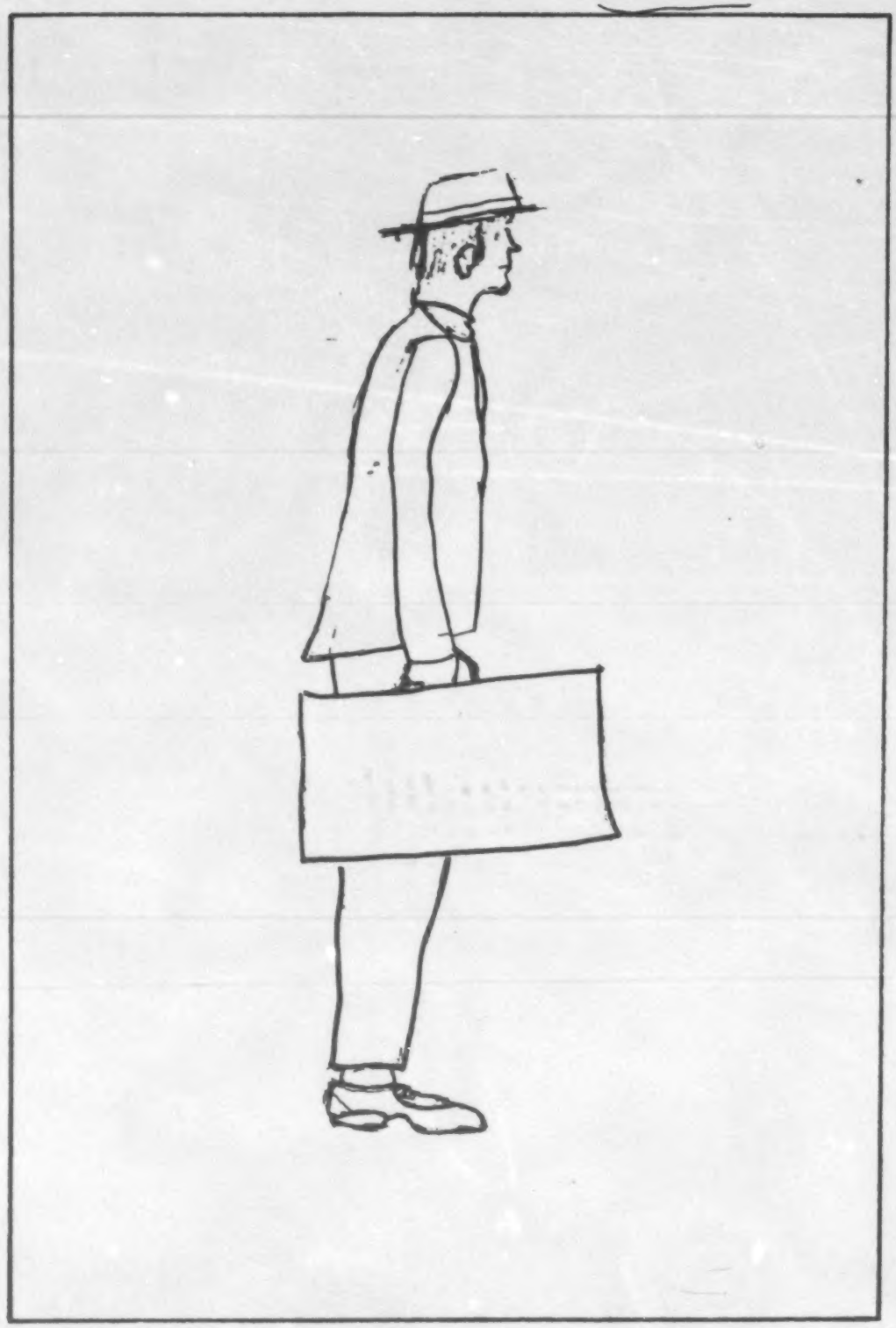


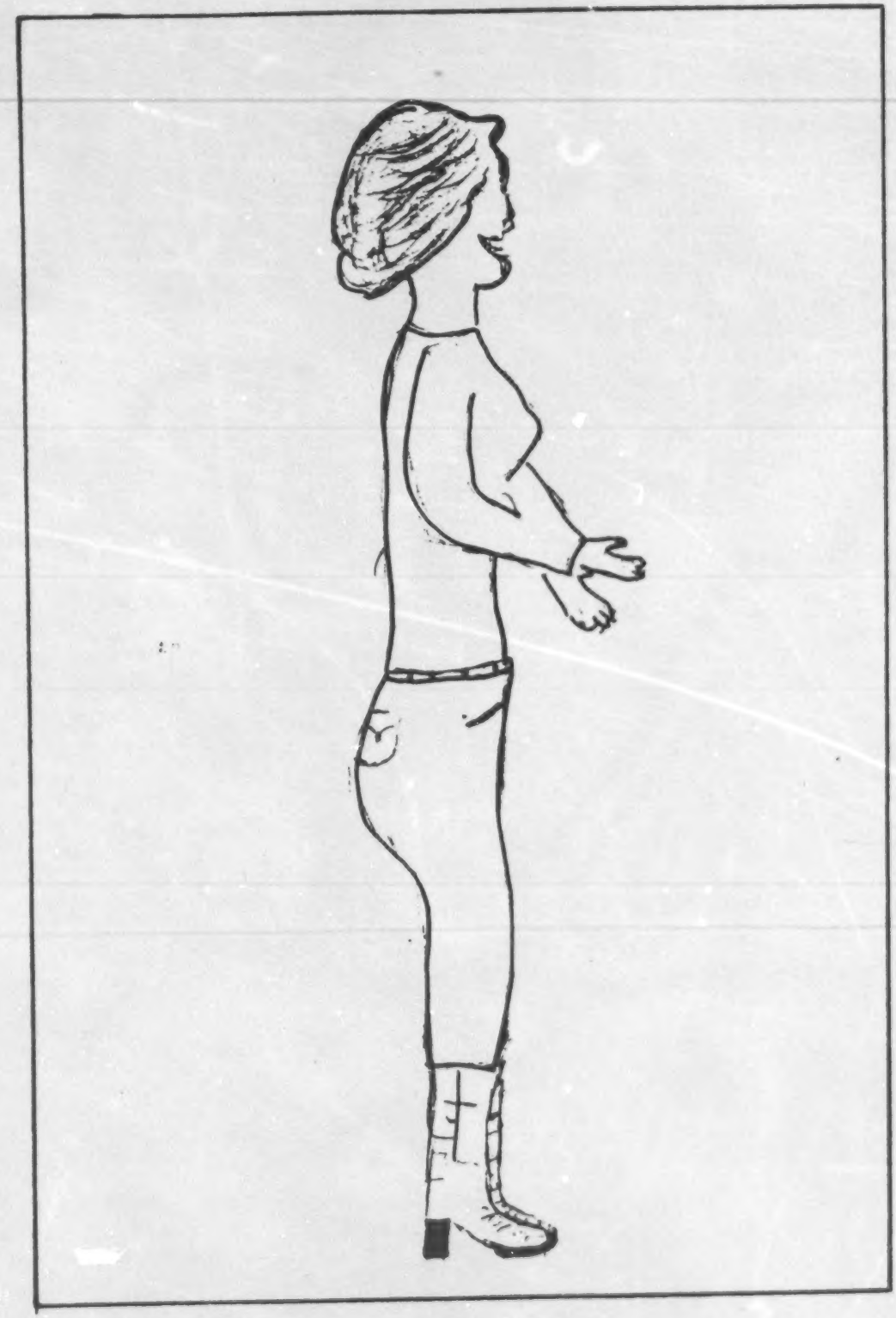
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

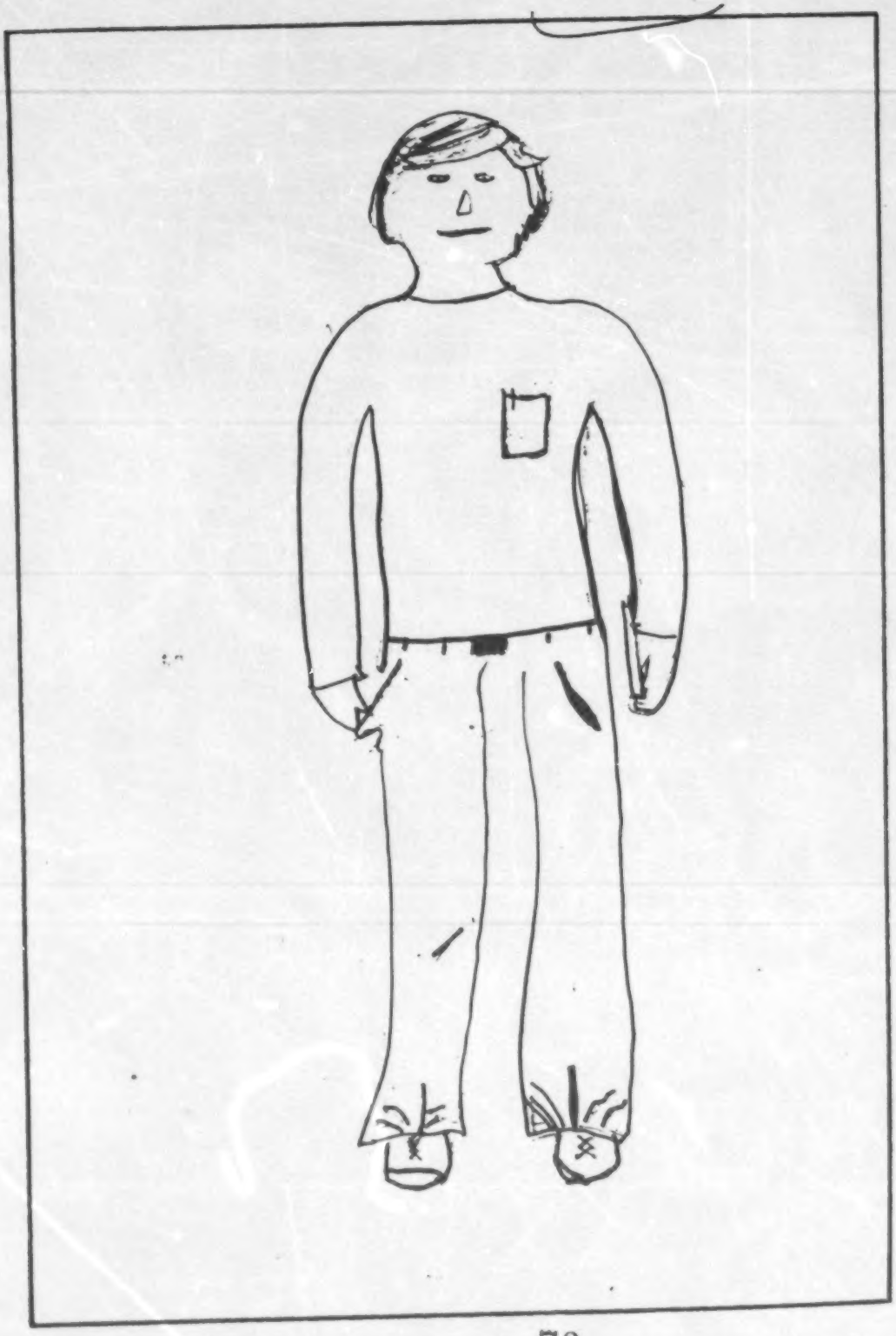
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

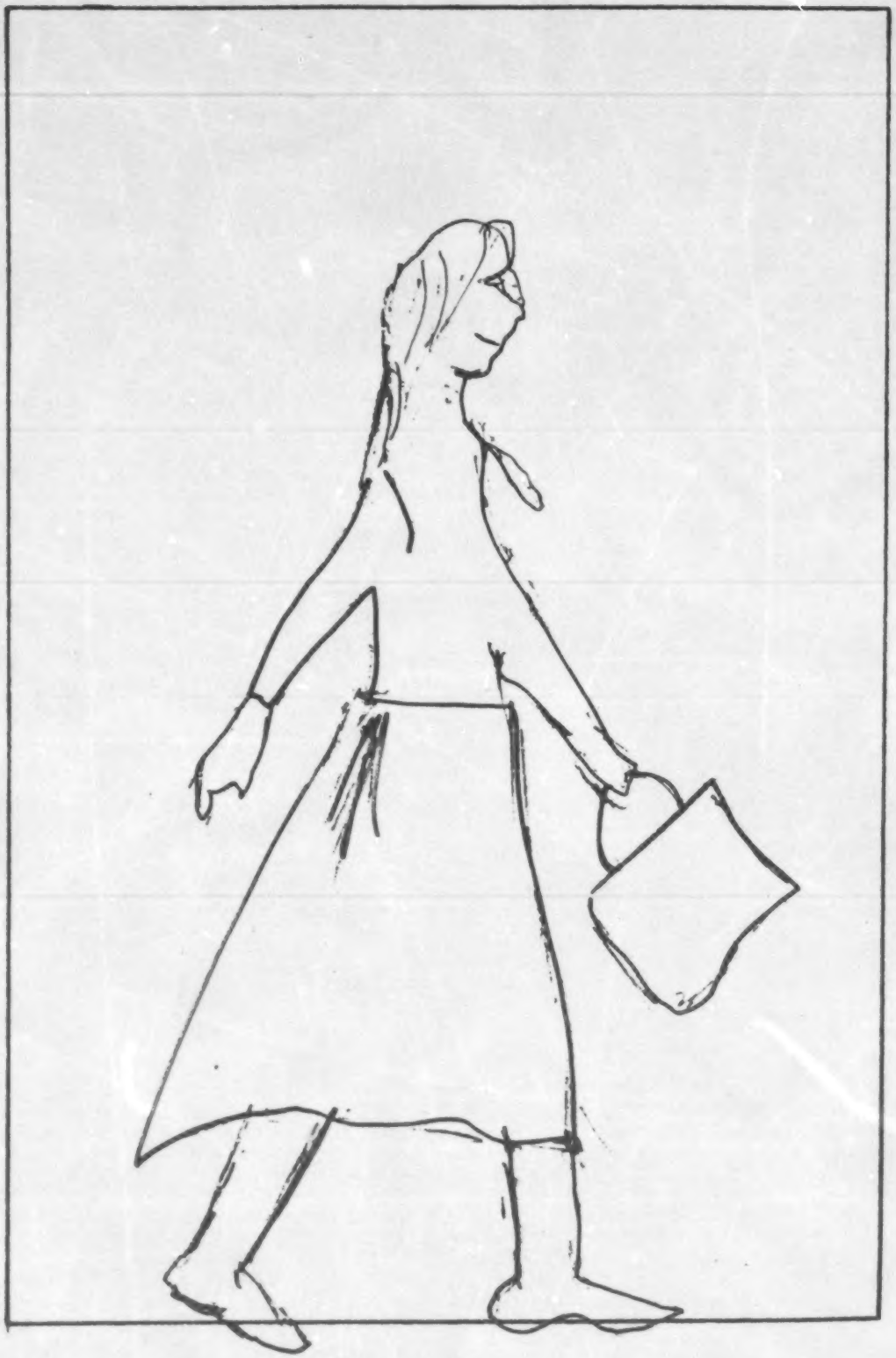
BEST COPY AVAILABLE



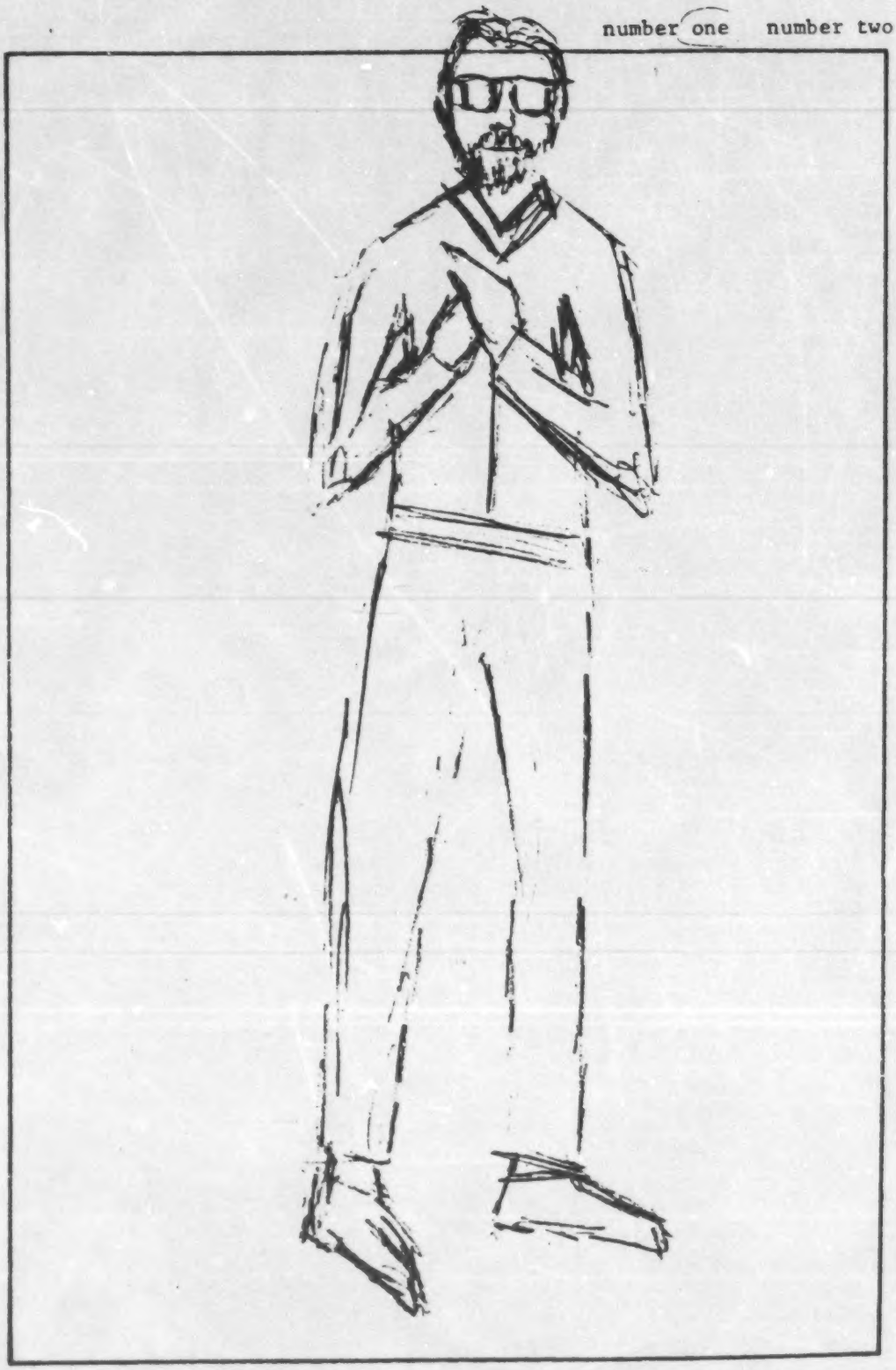


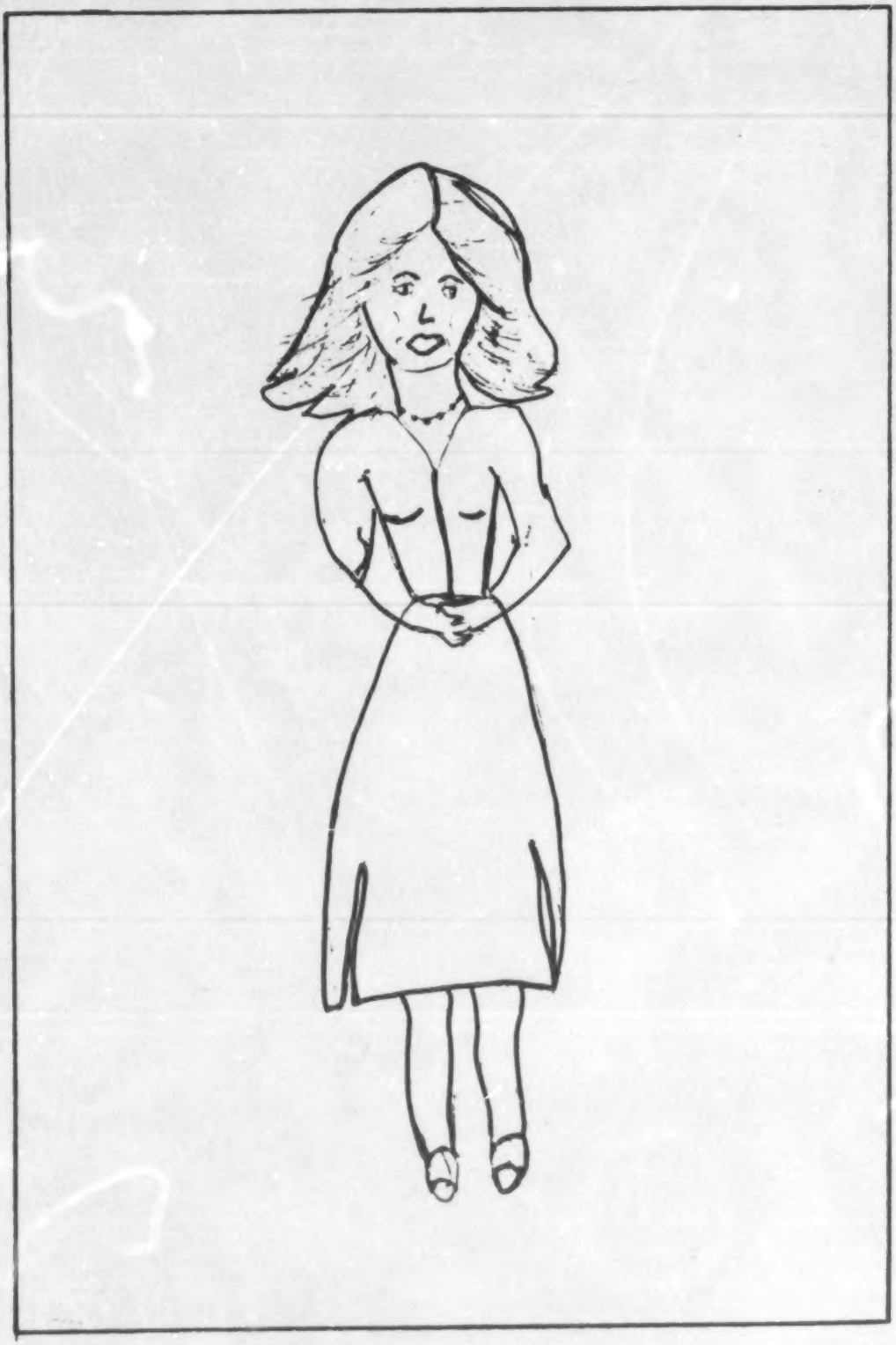


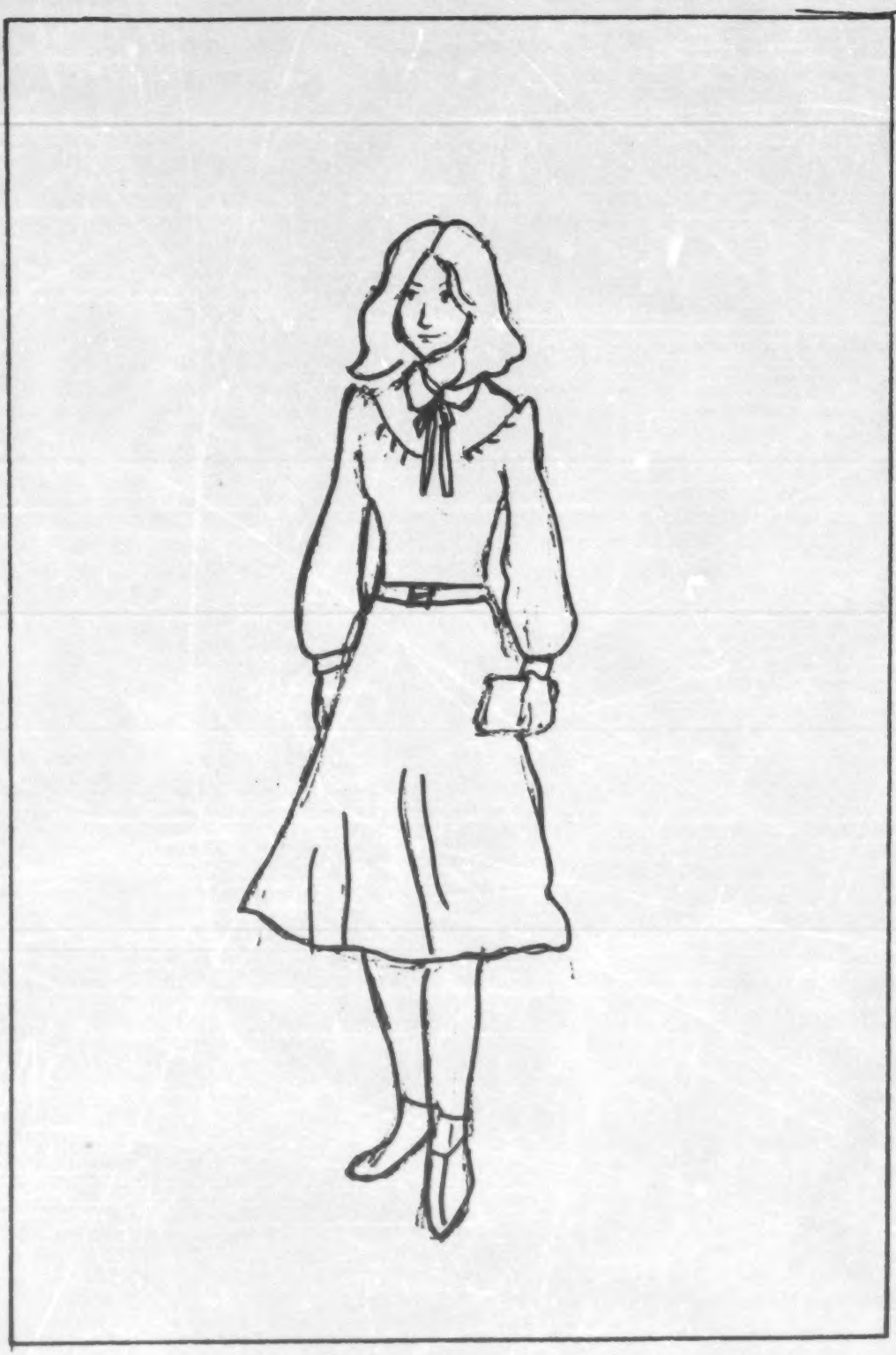


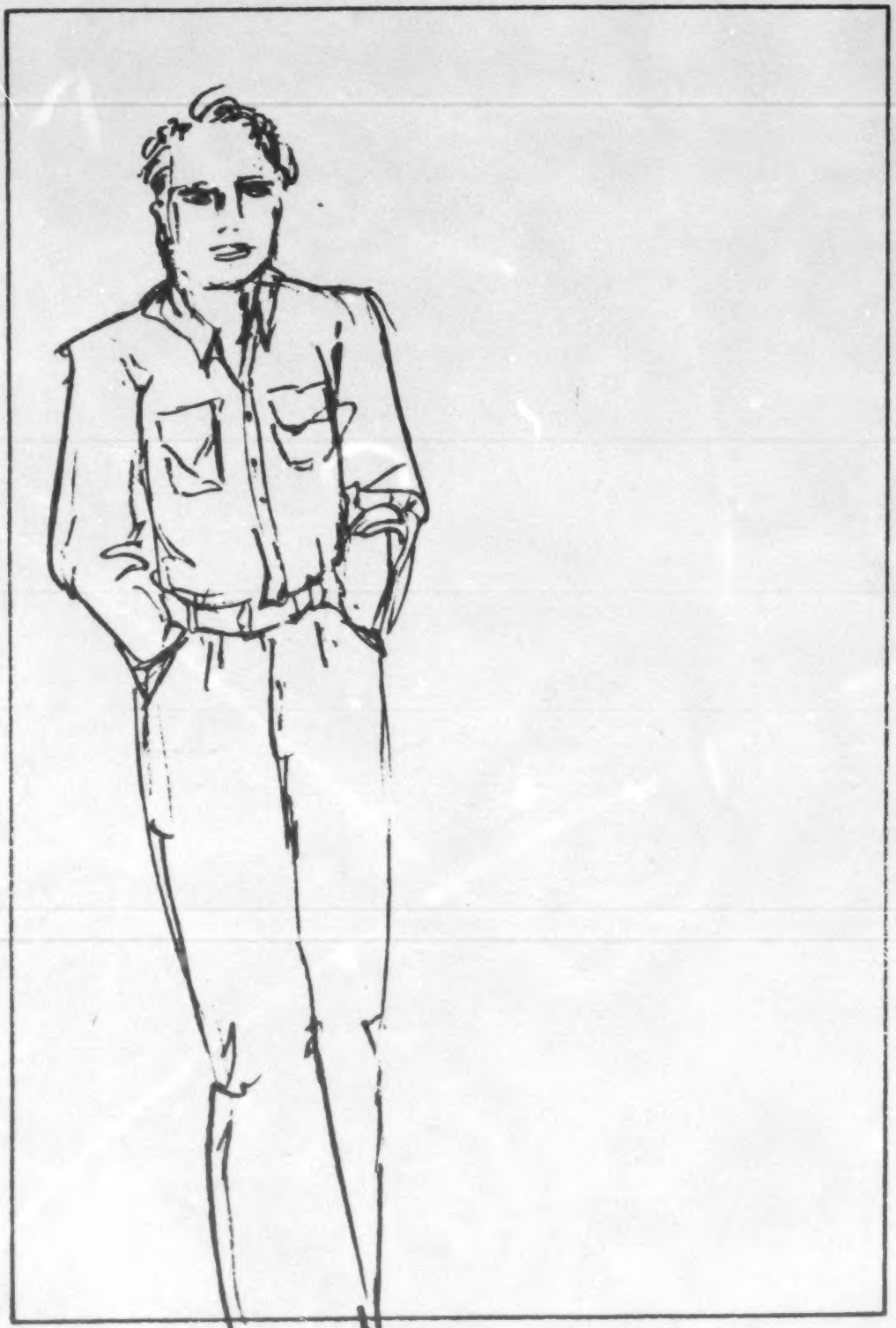


number one number two



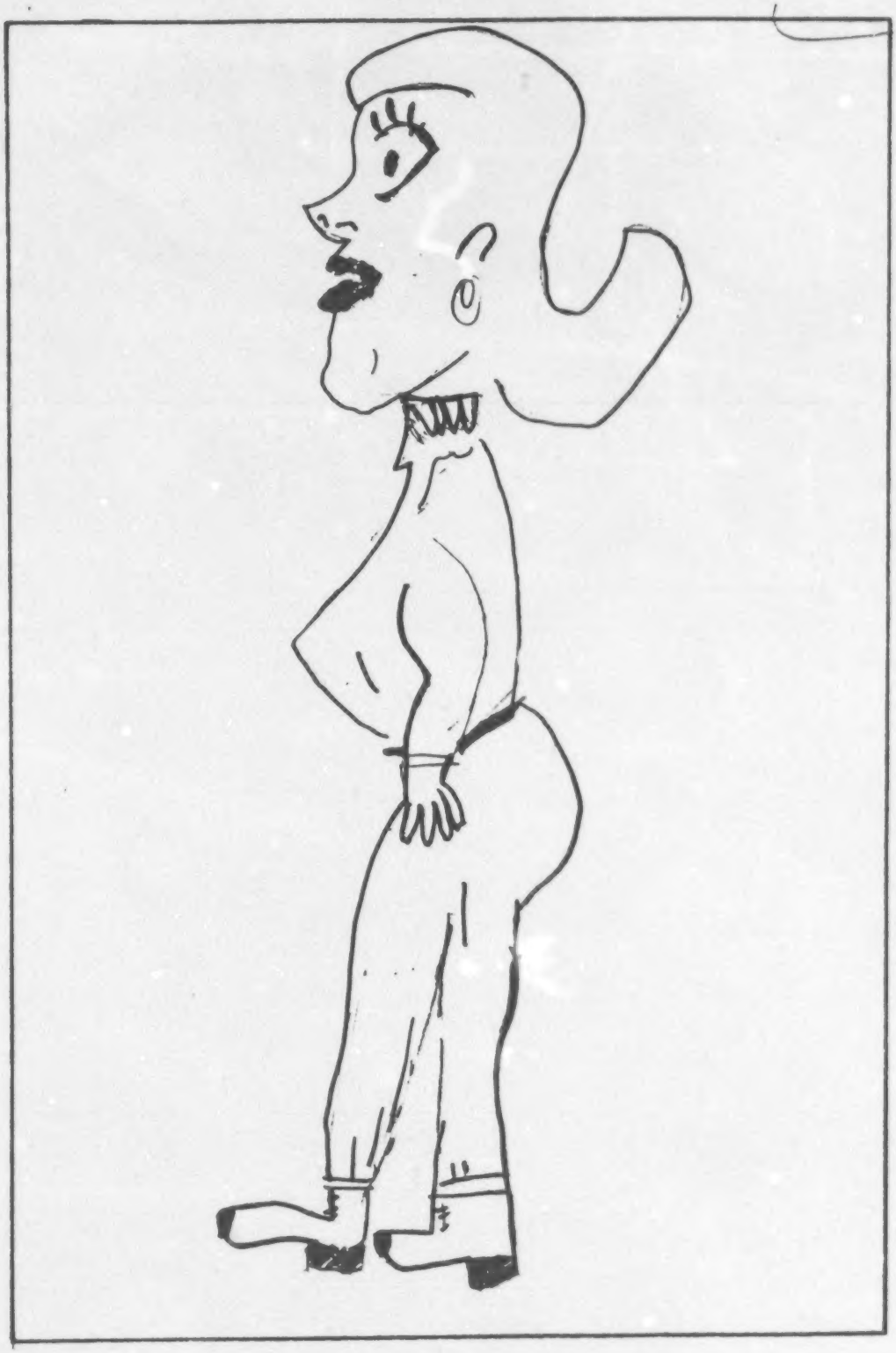


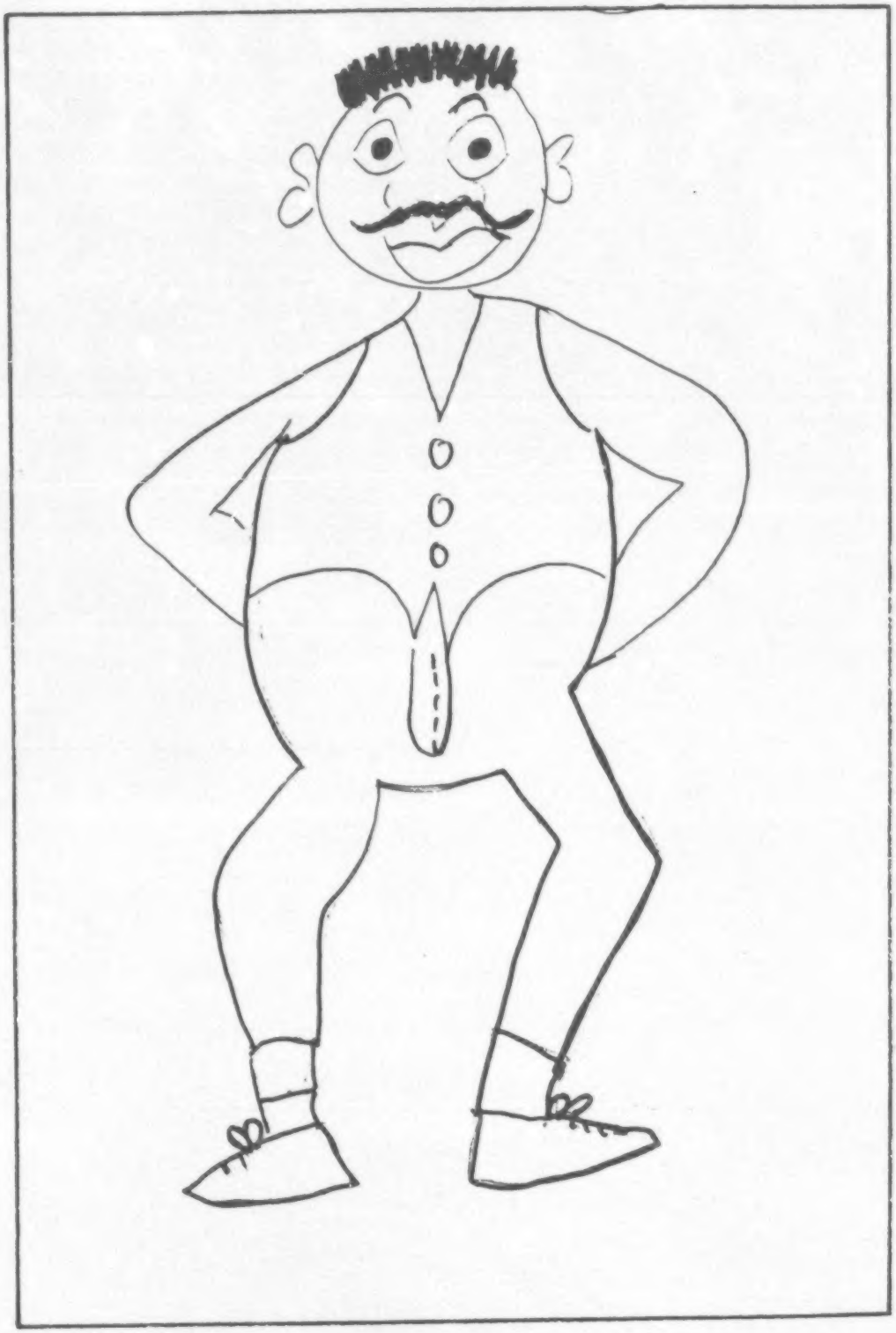




Hi, there,
BIG BOY

Macho
Johnny
kwok





MAN

WOMAN